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**Swansea University**  
**Prifysgol Abertawe**

**Wales' Hidden Industry:  
Domestic Service in South Wales, 1871-1921**

**Carys Howells**

Submitted to Swansea University in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

**2014**

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## Abstract.

This study examines domestic service as an 'industry' in south Wales between 1871 and 1921. The term 'domestic' has been interpreted as a description of duties performed rather than the place in which the tasks were carried out. As a result a broad depiction of the sector has emerged encompassing staff based in private households, businesses and public institutions. This approach has highlighted the importance of the sector in south Wales. It has also revealed significant changes in the nature of domestic service and the character of its workforce during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. The absence of central regulation, the development of impersonal recruitment methods and the prevalence of traditional gender ideology have all been shown to have had a notable influence on contemporary perceptions of the sector and its function in Welsh society. The research methodology draws on both qualitative and quantitative sources to reveal domestic service as a multifaceted and dynamic economic sector.



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## List of Abbreviations

CCL	Cardiff Central Library
CRO	Carmarthenshire Records Office
GA	Glamorgan Archives
GTJ	Gathering the Jewels
GFS	Girls' Friendly Society
GWR	Great Western Railway
LSE	London School of Economics
MABYS	Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants
NLW	National Library of Wales
PP	Parliamentary Paper
SAIHCA	The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre Archives
SWML	South Wales Miners' Library
WGAS	West Glamorgan Archive Service

## **Introduction: Redefining Domestic Service as 'Industry' in South Wales.**

Domestic service was an incredibly important industry in Wales during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. For over a hundred years domestic service was the main form of female employment. Between 1871 and 1901 it accounted for over half of all occupied women and a higher than average proportion of men.<sup>1</sup> While in England male domestics were in a minority of 1 in 22, in Wales they accounted for 1 in 10 servants.<sup>2</sup> Despite the dominance of heavy industry in the area, domestic service also had a significant impact on the wider economy. In 1881 there were only 5,000 fewer servants in Wales than quarry and mine workers. However despite its scale, domestic service has failed to attract the same degree of scholarly attention as other economic sectors.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, comparatively little is known of the character of this significant Welsh industry or the impact it had on the society in which it functioned. It has therefore largely remained hidden from the history of Wales.

This study focuses on fifty years of its evolution, between 1871 and 1921, during which time the sector was numerically at its height and underwent a monumental degree of change. However, domestic service has proved to be a highly enduring sector that has lasted up to the present day and has been in expansion since the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> The industry has been the focus of many British and American investigations owing to its size and its role as a principal site of contact (or indeed conflict) between different social groups on the grounds of class, gender, and ethnicity.<sup>5</sup> As a result developments in domestic service have been perceived as indicative of wider trends in society. Yet, the sector in south Wales has often been overlooked except as a source of maids for English middle-class employers. This was partly the result of the dominance of heavy industry, which was thought to have limited local female employment options. Its neglect may also be attributed to the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, Vol. 1. (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press, 1985), p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975), p. 84.

<sup>3</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, p. 96; J. Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised? Essays in Modern Welsh History* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1995), p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> L. Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Servants in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> M. Patterson, *Private Life in Britain's Stately Homes: Masters and Servants in the Golden Age* (London: Constable and Robinson Ltd, 2012), p. 25; Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 236.

association between working-class identity and the Welsh national character. While domestic service has been depicted as typifying the English social hierarchy, its frequent class connotations has been at odds with the traditional proletarian image of Wales.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, a study of domestic service challenges our perception of Welsh national identity, the wider British service industry and those who were associated with it, either as servant-keepers or domestics.

A whole-industry approach has been undertaken, considering domestic service not simply in terms of its component occupations but as a multifaceted sector with an identifiable occupation structure, pay scale and trade organisations. The treatment of domestic service as an industry provides an in-depth study that looks beyond personal experiences, stereotypes and misconceptions to uncover the true nature of the industry and the way it functioned in south Wales. An industry approach is based on a revisionist interpretation of the term 'domestic'. It is understood as a descriptor of the duties performed rather than the place in which the work was undertaken. As a result this thesis offers a broad survey of domestic service that encompasses workers engaged in private households, businesses, and local government institutions. Mark Ebery and Brian Preston were amongst the first to highlight how the growth of the tertiary sector, in Britain during the nineteenth century, facilitated the expansion of domestic service out of private residences and into the public arena.<sup>7</sup> However, the majority of secondary literature has continued to focus on household workers and, disproportionately so, on country house staff.<sup>8</sup> However an holistic approach highlights the industry's diverse role in society and provides a fuller depiction of the organisation of the sector and the character of its workforce. A study of the wider industry also more closely reflects contemporary perceptions of domestic service. This is evident in newspapers and first-hand accounts. The *Western Mail*, classified positions in businesses and institutions under the same heading as household staff, in its 'situations vacant' columns. It was only in 1891 that 'hotel servants' were separated into their own subsection.<sup>9</sup> By 1921 the

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<sup>6</sup> L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), pp. 6-7.

<sup>7</sup> M. Ebery, and B. Preston, *Geographical Papers: Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 1871-1914* (Reading: University of Reading, 1976), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 26. Examples of country house studies include Patterson's *Private Life in Britain's Stately Homes* and J. Musson, *Up and Down Stairs: The History of the Country House Servant* (London: John Murray, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> 'Situations Vacant', *Western Mail*, 1891.

majority of domestic service occupations had been organised into separate categories. Yet, hotel workers were still included with other servants, sandwiched between ‘housekeepers, companions’ and ‘gardeners, chauffeurs’.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile personal testimony and various press accounts have demonstrated how domestic workers frequently moved between private homes and other establishments such as hospitals, clubs, hotels and pubs.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, an inclusive ‘industry’ approach to domestic service provides a fuller understanding of the character of the sector, the way it functioned and those who were engaged in its workforce.

There has been a significant degree of historical debate surrounding the exact occupational composition of domestic service. The word ‘servant’, in itself, has proved vague and changeable.<sup>12</sup> Up to the eighteenth-century it referred to a range of manual labourers, including the live-in workers more typically associated with the sector.<sup>13</sup> Yet, subsequent historians have placed narrower boundaries on who constituted a member of its workforce. For instance, J. Jean Hecht’s study of eighteenth-century domestics failed to include dairy maids as ‘obviously maids of this sort can no more be considered domestics than the apprentices so frequently taken by artisans both to aid them in their work and do the drudgery at home’.<sup>14</sup> Yet, other secondary literature and primary material have either included farm servants or have demonstrated that dairy work was frequently a chore assigned to indoor maids.<sup>15</sup> Certainly, Mrs Beeton’s contemporary guide to household management classed dairy maids as ‘female domestics’, positioning them between discussions on ‘maids of all work’ and laundry servants.<sup>16</sup> Hecht’s comment on the duties of apprentices also highlights how prior to the separation of home and work locations, servants also performed a dual role working in both spheres. Carolyn Steedman has

<sup>10</sup> ‘Situations Vacant’, *Western Mail*, 1921.

<sup>11</sup> ‘A Disorderly House at Aberdare’, *Western Mail*, 23 November 1887; SWML: AUD/399, ‘Women’s’ Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley’, Audio Recordings; SWML: AUD/478, ‘Women’s Work Experiences’.

<sup>12</sup> D. Marshall, ‘The English Domestic Servant in History’ in *General Series of the Historical Association*, 13 (London: The Historical Association, 1949), p. 3.

<sup>13</sup> B. Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> J. J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1956) p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*; R. Gant, ‘Domestic Service in a Small Market Town: Crickhowell, 1851-1901’ in *Local Population Studies* 84 (2010) pp. 11-30; J. Barber, ‘Stolen Goods: The Sexual Harassment of Female Servants in West Wales during the Nineteenth Century’ in *Rural History* 4 (1993) pp. 123-136.

<sup>16</sup> I. Beeton, *Mrs Beeton’s Household Management* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2006) pp. 964-968.

pointed out that a servant's duties were seldom confined to the domestic sphere.<sup>17</sup> This was especially true of those working in establishments such as farms, shops and boarding houses. The introduction of a tax on male servants in 1777 highlighted the ambiguity surrounding the sector. Discrepancies arose between employers and the government as the former declared their employees to be shop assistants or agricultural workers who assisted with household chores, while the latter viewed them as servants who helped out in the family business and so could be taxed. This distinction only became clearer with the more concrete division of home and work in the nineteenth century.

Similarly, 'domestic servant', a phrase coined in the early nineteenth-century by census enumerators, was also initially imprecise.<sup>18</sup> This can be attributed to its primary function as a way of distinguishing civil servants from all other servants.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, domestic staff originally acquired their collective identity from what they were not rather than the presence of unifying characteristics. Any attempts to categorise or classify the industry have been complicated by the continual modification and extension in its occupational boundaries throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century.<sup>20</sup> The fragmented nature of domestic service also militated against easy categorisation. The extensive range of occupations, multiple places of work and diverse duties, combined with a general lack of central organisation or regulation also hinders definition. It has been generally accepted that 'domestic service' was an 'umbrella term' for a range of occupations.<sup>21</sup> However, there remains no consensus on which occupations are included. While some academics have restricted themselves to country house staff for instance, others have included occupations as varied and obscure as 'menagerie guide', 'layer out of the dead' and 'wig maker'.<sup>22</sup> In fact, Ebery and Preston have identified over 250 domestic service occupations in their census-based study of Victorian and Edwardian England.<sup>23</sup> Meanwhile, Robert Gant identified 35 male positions and 43 female occupations in

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<sup>17</sup> C. Steedman, 'The Servant's Labour: The Business of Life, England 1760-1820' in *Journal of Social History* 29 (2004), p. 11.

<sup>18</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Musson, *Up and Down Stairs*, p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> E. S. Turner, *What the Butler Saw: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Servant Problem* (London: Penguin Publishers, 2001) p. 285.

<sup>21</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 252.

<sup>22</sup> Musson *Up and Down Stairs*; Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*.

<sup>23</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, pp. 114-117.



the village of Crickhowell alone.<sup>24</sup> A case-study of Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, has discovered that there were 32 different occupations present in the fifteen streets sampled in each town. Despite its fragmented nature, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the sector had established a distinctive identity in the census enumerator books, in the minds of contemporaries and in popular culture thereafter.

There is also a lack of consensus on which factors a definition of domestic service should be based. Historians have aimed to describe the sector's boundaries in terms of the place of work, nature of duties, the residential (live-in) character of the positions and the type of relationship between servants and employers. Yet, none have reached a truly satisfactory definition that could be employed in this study. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defined a servant as 'a person of either sex who is in the service of a master or mistress; one who is under obligation to work for the benefit of a superior, and to obey his (or her) commands'.<sup>25</sup> This is echoed in the description presented by Jeremy Musson that a 'servant is one who attends another, and acts at his command- the correlative of master'.<sup>26</sup> The necessity of a master excludes a notable proportion of the industry who worked for a number of employers or large organisations, for instance gardeners or daily cleaner. Meanwhile, the notion that a servant was a person who worked 'for the benefit of a superior' could refer to a range of occupations beyond the domestic service industry. Others have sought to provide a more specific definition, for instance, Theresa McBride has claimed that 'strictly speaking, a servant was one who occupied himself exclusively with the personal needs of an employer and of his family in such a way, that this occupation established a relationship of personal dependence on the employer. The cultural idea was a household servant who could be lodged and fed by the employer'.<sup>27</sup> The emphasis here is placed upon the residential and dependent nature of the master and servant relationship. However, McBride acknowledges that the term denoted a range of outdoor and indoor employees, both living with their employers and in their own accommodation. She also argues that there were multiple notions of domestic service, with the reality often differing greatly from public perceptions of the sector.

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<sup>24</sup> Gant, 'Domestic Service in a Small Market Town', p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com) [accessed 2 March 2013].

<sup>26</sup> Musson, *Up and Down Stairs*, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup> T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820- 1920* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976) p. 11.

Bridget Hill has also contested the idea that service was comprised of people 'mainly concerned with domestic work in the house'.<sup>28</sup> Rather, she insists that 'as diverse as they were in the households that employed them and in the work they were called on to perform, they shared the duty of complete and unquestioning obedience to their masters and mistresses, the subsuming of their own background, social identity, and personality in that of their employers. In this sense servants did form a homogeneous body'.<sup>29</sup> Similarly to McBride, the focus is once again on the relationship with their employers. Her argument differs in highlighting the cultural impact of service on the identity of the servants, rather than it merely being a question of economic dependence. However, any definition based solely on the nature of the relationship with the employer, place of work or the requirement to live-in, opens itself up to the possibility of excluding various segments of the service workforce. Therefore, in the interests of clarity and consistency, a working definition of the industry has been established. This aims to provide as accurate an understanding of the nature of the sector and its broader function in south Wales as possible.

For the purposes of this study a domestic servant is defined as someone who legally provided personal, non-medical assistance and/or engaged in the execution of tasks that promoted cleanliness, comfort, and convenience, in return for wages or salary. However, it is acknowledged that this description is not without its flaws. For instance, the exclusion of medical duties may foster the false impression that servants such as lady's maids and companions did not provide care for invalid employers. Yet, this clause seeks to distinguish between those largely unqualified helpers and actual medical nurses.<sup>30</sup> The proviso of a salary or wage can also be challenged as kin servants and domestics sourced from workhouses and orphanages often received little more than their board and lodge.<sup>31</sup> Yet, the receipt of financial remuneration was a key factor in separating a helpful relative from a general servant, and an adopted child from an adolescent domestic helper. Therefore, the definition provides the most accurate description possible of the occupations investigated in this study.

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<sup>28</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 251.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p. 252.

<sup>30</sup> B. Abel-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1970) p. 4. Domestic service was an antecedent of the nursing profession. The gap between servants and nurses became wider and clearer as the nursing sector became more established in the mid-nineteenth century. Rather than a decline in the number domestics, it is possible that occupations such as nursing merely splintered off from the industry.

<sup>31</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 255.

The decades between 1871 and 1921 formed a key stage in the development of the domestic service sector. During this period the number of servants and the proportion of the overall workforce they accounted for changed dramatically. The late-nineteenth century has commonly been perceived as the high point for domestic service in Britain.<sup>32</sup> Meanwhile, the advent of the First World War has been viewed as a catalyst for the contraction of the sector during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> A thorough examination of the impact of the conflict on the industry has been hindered by the inaccessibility of much of the primary evidence. Qualitative material is scarce and the 1921 census enumerators' books are currently unavailable. Therefore the study has been compelled to rely on published census tables to gain a statistical overview of the industry after 1911. A survey of the situations vacant advertisements published in the *Western Mail* newspaper, in 1914, 1916 and 1918, has also been conducted in order to discover the size and occupational composition of the sector during the war years. However, despite an increase in advertisements, there was a severe reduction in the detail included rendering analysis of trends concerning age, wage and religion incredibly difficult.

Yet, the character of service underwent a significant degree of change during the period studied as a whole. For instance, there was a decline in the number of specialist liveried staff, reminiscent of the eighteenth-century, and an increase in the proportion of daily cleaners, generally associated with the twentieth century. This was accompanied by a change in the demographic of domestics and servant-keepers, recruitment methods, and servant-employer relations. Although the late Victorian and Edwardian era has frequently been seen as a key period in the development of the English and the wider British industry, studies of Welsh servants have frequently been based on their interwar experiences. This is owing to the large number of girls who left south Wales during the depression to take up positions in cities such as London.<sup>34</sup> However, the development of the sector between 1871 and 1921 was equally as important for both the Welsh industry and the wider country and is therefore worthy of examination. The fifty years examined also transcend many of the 'periodisation markers' frequently used by historians such as the Victorian

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<sup>32</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 27; Ebery, and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 20; Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 164.

<sup>33</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, pp. 30 and 164.

<sup>34</sup> M. A. Williams, 'The New London Welsh: Domestic Servants 1918-1939' in *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 9 (2003) pp. 135-51.

Period, the turn of the century, the Edwardian Era, and the First World War. This provides an insight into the gradual nature of developments in the sector and deepens our understanding of the factors that influenced its evolution.

South Wales was an important geographical region for the domestic service industry in Britain. The area did not only provide a notable quantity of servants to be exported to households in England and the colonies, it was also a key location for servant recruitment, providing a plethora of opportunities for both local girls and a vast array of migrant workers. Domestic service was a highly significant industry in Wales, with a peak of 110,238 workers in 1891.<sup>35</sup> Consequently, it accounted on average for fifty-five percent of occupied females and remained dominant throughout the study period.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, 'quarries and mines', the largest male employment sector, represented only 25 percent of working men in Wales.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the importance of domestic service, especially for women, is evident. Yet, despite its scale, domestic service has failed to attract a significant level of academic interest.<sup>38</sup> This has been attributed to the preoccupation with 'coalfield history' in Welsh historiography, the female character of the workforce and its limited role in shaping working-class consciousness.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, service accounted for a larger proportion of working women in Wales than in England.<sup>40</sup> For example, in 1871 the industry accounted for 39 percent of occupied English women, while it accounted for 54 percent of their Welsh counterparts. Yet, English domestics have provoked a considerably larger degree of scholarly attention than Welsh servants. The traditional association of the Welsh national character with working-class identity militated against a study of domestic service.<sup>41</sup> This has been exacerbated by the erroneous belief that servant employers were exclusively middle-class.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, acknowledgement of the industry as a thriving economic sector in Wales would have challenged a central component of Welsh cultural identity.

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<sup>35</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, p. 96.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised?* p. 40.

<sup>38</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, p. 96; Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised?* p. 40.

<sup>39</sup> J. Light, 'Of inestimable value to the town and district?' *A Study of the Urban Middle-Classes in South Wales with Particular Reference to Pontypool, Bridgend and Penarth c. 1850-1890* (Cardiff University: PhD Thesis, 2003), p. 30; C. Fairchild, *Domestic Enemies: Servants and Their Masters in Old Regime France* (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. xi.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised?* p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> R. M. Jones, 'Beyond identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh' in *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992) p. 349.

<sup>42</sup> Light, *Of inestimable value to the town and district?* pp. 61-63.

The notion of domestic service as alien to Welsh society is apparent in the level of attention directed at migrant domestics in the related literature. Welsh servants have been the main focus of only four studies although the sector features briefly in a number of broader texts on subjects such as the changing role of women.<sup>43</sup> Despite limited attention, the experience of migrant maids, particularly those who relocated to London, have received a disproportionate level of consideration compared to the actual minority of servants that moved. The migration of servants is explored in Mari A. Williams' article, entitled 'The New London Welsh: Domestic Servants 1918-1939', which explores the position of domestics in London society and the economic factors that induced their move.<sup>44</sup> Likewise, Emrys Jones provides a detailed discussion of the presence of Welsh servant in Victorian London in *The Welsh in London*.<sup>45</sup> He argues that the Welsh may have been resident in affluent districts such as Paddington but were largely confined to the attics due to their servant status. Rosemary Scadden's doctoral thesis, 'Be good sweet maid, and let who will be clever' and Deirdre Beddoe's *Out of the Shadows* have also highlighted the mass movement of women out of Wales in search of work in England.<sup>46</sup> Only Robert Gant and Jill Barber have based their studies solely in Wales.<sup>47</sup> A narrative is, therefore discernible in the literature, of Welsh working-class girls being compelled by economic hardship to labour in the affluent households of the English bourgeoisie. Yet, as this study reveals, many more Welsh servants remained in Wales, moving no further than the nearest town and often working in quite humble establishments.

A focus on the industry in Wales has revealed its unique character and facilitated an examination of issues such as the relationship between national stereotypes and public perceptions of servants and the capacity of cultural, linguistic and religious divides to influence employer-worker relations. However, this study

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<sup>43</sup> R. Scadden, 'Be good sweet maid, and let who will be clever': *A Study of Welsh Girls in Domestic Service during the Interwar Period*, (Swansea University: PhD Thesis, 1996); Williams, 'The New London Welsh', pp. 135-51; Barber, 'Stolen Goods', pp. 123-136; Gant, 'Domestic Service in a Small Market Town', p. 16; E. Roberts, *Women's Work 1840- 1940* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), pp. 9-10; D. Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth-Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000).

<sup>44</sup> Williams, 'The New London Welsh', pp. 135-51.

<sup>45</sup> E. Jones, 'Victorian Heyday' in E. Jones, (ed.) *The Welsh in London 1500-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 110-126.

<sup>46</sup> Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*; Scadden, 'Be good sweet maid and let who will be clever'.

<sup>47</sup> Gant, 'Domestic Service in a Small Market Town'; Barber, 'Stolen Goods'.

also contributes to the wider scholarly debate on the sector. Features such as the need for a whole-industry approach and the focus on service as an economic sector rather than individual experience provides an alternative lens through which service can be viewed. Local case-studies also demonstrate the variability of service and its capacity to adapt to the requirements of the society in which it functioned. The relationships between macro developments and local trends can also be observed. This has proved particularly true of changes concerning gender, recruitment and industrial regulation. Therefore, the Welsh character of this study facilitates an exploration of unique aspects of the industry hitherto neglected but also contributes to the wider field of study on domestic service in Britain.

Although domestic service in Wales has received scant attention it was also omitted from traditional British labour histories.<sup>48</sup> This was partly the result of theorists such as Karl Marx, Adam Smith and John Locke advocating the view that servants' duties were 'non-work'. Their denial of service as a valid form of labour centred on its inability to produce 'vendible things'.<sup>49</sup> This was thought to have led to the ostracism of domestics from the rest of the proletariat.<sup>50</sup> Although Marx's subsequent definition of labour as a 'moment of action' should have facilitated their inclusion, it failed to do so.<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Cissie Fairchilds has argued that 'traditionally the social history of the lower classes was primarily labour history, which focused on the formation of the modern working-class and its eventual emergence into class consciousness... servants did not simply fit this mould'.<sup>52</sup> This she accredited to the widely held view that the servants' 'work was unproductive; their social attitudes were disappointingly deferential; and they rarely left the domestic sphere of the household to take part in politics. Also many were women... an automatic disincentive for study.'<sup>53</sup> This was especially true of Wales where national identity, subsequent to urbanisation and industrialisation, centred on notions of masculinity, radicalism and socialism.<sup>54</sup> These notions were personified in the form of the coal miner, and it presented an image that dominated Welsh identity in

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<sup>48</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> Steedman, 'The Servant's Labour', pp. 4-5.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, p. xi.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, 'Beyond identity?' p. 349.

the twentieth century.<sup>55</sup> As domestic servants in south Wales were mainly female, seldom produced 'vendible things' and failed to form effective trade unions they did not adhere to the dominant concept of the working class in Wales. In contrast the overriding image of women was that of the long-suffering 'Welsh Mam'.<sup>56</sup> Their position, in the otherwise male dominated cultural landscape, was consolidated through their connection to coal miners, as their wives, daughters or mothers. Their duties centred on the maintenance of a respectable domestic haven in 'an intensely male world'.<sup>57</sup> As Marxist ideology began to wane in the mid-twentieth century, and approaches such as 'history from below' and gender studies developed, servants were increasingly viewed as part of the working class.<sup>58</sup> However their social position has remained somewhat ambiguous. Servants have generally been portrayed as budding 'Welsh Mams' and this has greatly conditioned the way they have been perceived. The overriding image of servants in Wales has been of young, 'long-suffering', house-based girls. Consequently, older women, skilled occupations, male workers and institution or business based staff have been neglected. Meanwhile domestic service has largely been identified with English society. The middle-class servant-keeping home is said to have been a 'symbol of quintessential English values' such as comfort, order and restraint.<sup>59</sup> This association with English culture has led to the industry remaining largely hidden from the history of Wales beyond the movement of girls out of the country to work for the English middle-class.

During the post-war era heightened public preoccupation with the class system, and the belief that service was on the verge of extinction stimulated significant interest in the sector. This was to be viewed in the publication of new academic studies of service and through a wider cultural preoccupation with Victorian servants. Many of the key texts consulted in this study were published during this period. Of particular significance has been Theresa McBride's *The Domestic Revolution* (1976), Pamela Horn's *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (1975) and Frank Victor Dawes' *Not in Front of the Servants* (1973), to

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p. 345.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 349.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> S. Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900-1950' in *Past and Present* 28 (2009) p. 182.

<sup>59</sup> J. Giles, 'Authority, Dependence and Power in Accounts of Twentieth-Century Domestic Service' in L. Delap, et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 209.

name but a few.<sup>60</sup> A wider public interest in the topic was reflected in the popularity of television programmes and books such as *Upstairs Downstairs*, *Beryl's Lot* and the memoirs of Margaret Powell, *Below Stairs*.<sup>61</sup> In more recent times domestic service has experienced something of a renaissance with an increase in the size of its workforce.<sup>62</sup> Modern-day domestics are not only found in commercial businesses and state institutions but are being engaged by a wide variety of private individuals as housekeepers, cleaning ladies and *au pairs*. This has partly been triggered by increased migration providing a ready supply of workers and cultural factors such as working mothers which has heightened demand.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, domestic servants have once again been the subject of academic attention, although the focus has shifted to their twentieth-century experiences. A new wave of publications has emerged such as Pamela Horn's *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth-Century* (2001), Lucy Delap's *Knowing Their Place* (2011), and Lucy Lethbridge's *Servants* (2013).<sup>64</sup> Domestic servants have once again emerged as a potent figure in popular culture with the success of programmes such *Downton Abbey* and the brief return of *Upstairs Downstairs*.<sup>65</sup> Vast arrays of servant memoirs are now available as well as a new edition of Margaret Powell's autobiography.<sup>66</sup> This reflects the development of a wider interest in twentieth-century women's work experiences, with female police officers, midwives, nurses, and teachers being common subjects of interest.<sup>67</sup> This may have been the result of the increased prominence of women's history, popular

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<sup>60</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*; Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975).

<sup>61</sup> *Beryl's Lot* was a television programme loosely based on the life of ex-servant Margaret Powell broadcast between 1973 and 1977. Powell was an ex-kitchen maid who found fame as an author and television personality after the publication of her memoirs in 1968 entitled *Below Stairs*. The increased interest in servants is discussed further in Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, Preface; and Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 211-220.

<sup>62</sup> H. Lutz, 'At Your Service Madam! The Globalization of Domestic Services' in *Feminist Review*, 70 (2002), p. 89.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, p.90.

<sup>64</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*; P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth Century* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001); Delap, *Knowing Their Place*.

<sup>65</sup> Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, pp. 211-220.

<sup>66</sup> M. Powell, *Below Stairs: The Best Selling Memoirs of a 1920s Kitchen Maid*, (London: Pan MacMillan, 2011); Other examples include A. Moyle and J. F. McDonald, *Her Ladyship's Girl: A Maid's Life in London* (London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd, 2014); R. Harrison, *The Lady's Maid: My Life in Service*, (London: Ebury Press, 2011); N. Jackman and T. Quinn, *The Cook's Tale: Life Below Stairs as it Really Was*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2012); M. Moran, *Aprons and Silver Spoons: The Heart Warming Memoirs of a 1930s Kitchen Maid*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> Examples of memoirs include: G. Edwards, *The Best Medicine: The True Story of a Nurse Who Became a Doctor in the 1950s*, (London: Ebury Press, 2013); P. Rhodes and J. Wheeler, *Bobby on the Beat: The True Story of a 1950s Policewoman*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd, 2013); J. Worth, *Call the Midwife: A True Story of the East End in the 1950s*, (London: Pheonix, 2008).



nostalgia or even an intensification of interest in a period of history that is soon to be on the very edge of living memory.

A whole-industry approach has necessitated the inclusion of a wide range of primary material. Many difficulties have arisen in trying to examine domestic service as an industry owing to the general absence of company records and archive collections relating to the sector in south Wales. This is the result of the lack of central organisation and disconnected workplaces. Meanwhile, few historical records have been created by servants, while, their rare personal testimony often focused on individual experience rather than the wider industry.<sup>68</sup> To acquire as full and accurate a depiction of the sector as possible quantitative data has been used in conjunction with more qualitative sources. While the statistical data has generated an overview of the industry and its workforce, qualitative material has revealed the factors that influenced those trends. The latter form of evidence has also provided an insight into the aspects of the industry that defy quantification such as the servant-employer relationship and contemporary social attitudes. There is a transition in this study from the numerical data, vital in the analysis of the changing size and composition of the sector, to qualitative sources that have been central to the discussions on recruitment methods, gender roles and relationships. Some of the forms of evidence have featured frequently in the secondary literature such as the census enumerator books. However, other sources have been hitherto unused in any historical studies such as the novels of the Welsh author Allen Raine. Alternatively, several of the sources have featured in previous scholarly works but have been approached and interpreted in a different way. This is particularly evident in the use of vacancy advertisements published in the local press. It has widely been acknowledged that they were a prominent method of recruiting staff, yet no statistical analysis has ever been attempted and much of the valuable information they contain has previously been neglected.<sup>69</sup>

Owing to the 'fragmentary and scattered' nature of the sources an extensive range of primary material has been scrutinised.<sup>70</sup> The most prominent quantitative source used in this study is the *Census of England and Wales*. Trends such as

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<sup>68</sup> M. Waterson, *The Servants' Hall: A Domestic History of Erddig* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980) pp. 6-7; Fairchilds, *Domestic Enemies*, p. xiii.

<sup>69</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 258.

<sup>70</sup> Marshall, 'The English Domestic Servant', p. 29.

changing population size and occupation levels have been obtained from the official census tabulations and the *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*. However, Edward Higgs has questioned the reliability of the tabulations owing to ambiguities over who constituted a servant.<sup>71</sup> The employment of kin-servants (domestics engaged by members of their extended families) is thought to have been particularly problematic for both the enumerators, who collected the census scripts, and the clerks who tabulated the results.<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, Matthew Woolard has cast doubt over the usefulness of comparing census tables with those of previous years owing to the changing classification of occupations (discussed further in chapter one).<sup>73</sup> The movement of occupations such as gardener and nurse in and out of the domestic service is thought to have significantly influenced its overall size and workforce composition. Attention has also been drawn to the neglect of many forms of female employment and the oversight of casual and part-time work.<sup>74</sup> However, census enumerator books and their published tables remain one of the key historical sources on domestic service in Britain.<sup>75</sup>

Some of these issues have been circumvented by collating data directly from the census enumerators' books. Consequently, a case-study has been undertaken of three towns in south Wales, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen during the years 1871, 1891 and 1911. The statistical data failed to cover the entire timeframe of this study owing to the unavailability of the census enumerators' books from 1921, this has hampered a full evaluation of the impact of the First World War on the industry. The towns were selected owing to their varied locations, population demographic and economic characters. However, they are comparable in so much as they were important Welsh towns with a notable servant presence. They have also received little academic attention in contrast to other Welsh (and British) urban areas. The towns were deliberately selected to render visible the diversity in the industry. The inclusion of settlements in Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire provides a stark comparison between rural and urban Wales. It also highlights the influence of industrialisation, isolation and Anglicisation. Consequently, Carmarthen emerges as

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<sup>71</sup> E. Higgs, 'The Tabulations of Occupations in the Nineteenth-Century Census with Special Reference to Domestic Servants' in *Local Population Studies* 28 (1982) p. 63.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, p. 58.

<sup>73</sup> M. Woolard, 'The Classification of Domestic Servants in England and Wales 1851-1851' (Oslo: *Proceedings of the Servant Project*, volume II, 2002), [www.essex.ac.uk](http://www.essex.ac.uk) [accessed 15 May 2013].

<sup>74</sup> Roberts, *Women's Work*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>75</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 256.

a town with a more traditional domestic service industry owing to its insular workforce and more distinctive Welsh culture. This manifests itself in recruitment methods, occupational composition, and workforce demographic. Meanwhile, the industry in Aberdare and Bridgend possessed a more modern dynamic. This was the result of the higher levels of in-migration and the absence of a deeply entrenched servant-keeping tradition (especially in Aberdare). The prosperity that accompanied industrialisation in Glamorgan meant that a wider proportion of society was able to engage servants. This impacted on the character of the workforce and servant-employer relations throughout the period. For example, the acquisition of the servant-keeping status by lower income householders led to their vilification by employers and servants alike. Meanwhile, the retaining of servants was a necessity of life for many widowers, invalids and elderly people. Although the case-study is in no way representative of domestic service in south Wales as a whole, the analysis of the three towns is intended to provide a genuine insight into the diversity that existed in south Wales through bridging the gap between the coalfield, 'wild Wales' (rural Wales) and a location that conformed to neither representation.<sup>76</sup> The census case-study also compliments the quantitative sources such as situations vacant advertisements, archival documents and first-hand testimony that span south Wales as a whole.

The comparative census approach was undertaken by Ebery and Preston in their statistical exploration of *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*.<sup>77</sup> Their census-based study compared the enumerator books of a number of English towns, selecting the three most interesting results for closer analysis in each chapter. This proved a successful way of highlighting the influence of place on the domestic service industry. In south Wales, the entries for approximately 2000 servants and their employers were compiled from a sample of fifteen streets in each of the three towns. A nineteenth-century map of each town was used to select the streets, ensuring they varied in length, character and location.<sup>78</sup> An online genealogy

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<sup>76</sup> Jones, 'Beyond Identity?' p. 349.

<sup>77</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*.

<sup>78</sup> Ordnance Survey Maps, Bridgend 1900, Aberdare 1870, Carmarthen 1886. Aberdare Streets: Cannon Street; Cardiff Street; Catherine Street; Chapel Court; Clifton Street; Commercial Place; Commercial Street; Dare Villas aka Gadlys Terrace; Duke Street; Highland Place; Monk Street; Morgan Street; Nith Street; Seymour Street; Wind Street. Bridgend Streets: Angel Street; Caroline Street; Chapel Street; Church Street aka Merthyr Mawr Road; Cowbridge Road; Dunraven Place; Elder Street; Nolton Street; Oddfellows Row; Park Street; Queen Street; South Street; Union Street

website, Find My Past, was used to gain access to the digitalised census enumerator books. This site was selected as it provided the easiest way of undertaking a street search. Other such sites, owing to their primary focus on genealogy, possessed search engines more adept at finding people than places. This sampling technique provided the fairest way of obtaining a manageable yet representative body of data. The case-study reveals a wealth of information such as the occupation of both servants and their employers. The name and date of birth of domestics has been used to trace the servants in previous censuses, in order to determine the occupation of their parents. This not only enabled analyses of the occupational composition of the industry in the three towns but provides an insight into the class divide between householders and their staff. The census enumerator books also reveal the increasing age, proportion of married workers and migrants in the Welsh service industry. Such information indicates the reasons for entering the workforce or engaging staff and demonstrates how social factors influenced the nature and function of service. A number of other trends concerning the proportion of live-in staff, the changing nature of the establishments in which the servants worked and the number of servants engaged in each household or business was also rendered visible.

Census deficiencies are also alleviated by cross-referencing with other historical sources.<sup>79</sup> This study has relied heavily on newspapers, with the *Western Mail* featuring prominently in the form of articles, situations vacant advertisements and reader correspondence. These provide an indication of public opinion, contemporary depictions of service, and give an insight into the developments in the sector such as the formation of unions and charitable enterprises. Job advertisements published daily in the *Western Mail* offer an alternative indication of the occupations in demand such as the decline in specialist positions, increase in 'dailies', and gradual growth in the salary offered especially in the early-twentieth century. As the advertisements formed a key method of recruitment they correlate directly with levels of supply and demand and indicate the most sought after demographic of workers with regards to marital status, age and parenthood. The extent to which

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aka Market Street; West Street; Wyndham Street. Carmarthen Streets: Bridge Street; Cambrian Place; Chapel Street; Francis Terrace; King Street; Lammas Street; Magazine Row; Picton Place; Picton Terrace; Priory Street; Quay Street; Spilman Street; Union Street; Water Street; Wood's Row.

<sup>79</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 256; D. I Cooper, and M. Donald, 'Households and Hidden Kin in Early Nineteenth-Century England: Four Case Studies in Suburban Exeter, 1821-61', *Continuity and Change* 10 (1995), p. 458; Higgs, 'The Tabulations of Occupations', p. 59.

informal religious, ethnic and linguistic barriers operated can also be garnered from the job advertisements. Therefore, like the census they provide both quantifiable and qualitative information and a sampling technique was again required. To obtain a fair and representative sample, every advert appearing in the first newspaper of the month was recorded. The months were selected quarterly (January, April, July and October) for each census year between 1871 and 1921. This gave a sample of over 2500 adverts and appears to be the first time a quantitative study of the adverts has been attempted.<sup>80</sup> Like the census enumerator books, this form of evidence also has several drawbacks. Firstly, the *Western Mail* had more of an easterly focus and so information on Carmarthenshire is sparser than Glamorgan. The very nature of the source militated against the presence of large quantities of personal detail often being little more than a 'bare statement of detail'.<sup>81</sup> Newspaper advertising also comprised one of several methods of servant recruitment and only provides a partial depiction of the labour market. However, the adverts developed into one of the main methods of finding work and constitute an extremely useful and under-utilised historical source.<sup>82</sup>

Important evidence concerning domestic service in south Wales has been gleaned from articles published in a range of nineteenth-century newspapers. This has been deployed in several ways. Transcriptions of speeches and public meetings were occasionally published and facilitate an examination of the activities of organisations such as the National Vigilance Association, the Social Science Congress and the Domestic Service Union of Great Britain.<sup>83</sup> Meanwhile, newspaper articles have illuminated the social anxieties surrounding the servant shortage and the proposed measures to combat the decline in the availability of maids. The letter columns of the *Western Mail* have proved particularly important to the discussion on servant-employer relations. During December 1892 hundreds of letters from servants, their employers, their parents and general commentators were published. This was in response to an initial letter of complaint from a Swansea maid outlining the problems that existed in the sector and the need for a servant union in the area

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<sup>80</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 258.

<sup>81</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, pp. 39 and 47.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, p. 45; Hill, *Servants*, p. 258.

<sup>83</sup> 'Interview: Mrs Rose Mary Crawshay', *Women's Herald*, 19 March 1892; 'The Barmaid Question', *Western Mail*, 27 March 1900; 'Servant Girls and their Mistresses', *Western Mail*, 30 December 1892.

(see appendix one).<sup>84</sup> The subsequent correspondence has provided an insight into the perceived grievances of maids and mistresses and the impact developments in the industry, such as the channelling of destitute women into the sector, had on those who were engaged in it. An examination of employer and servant grievances also help explain the transformations in occupational composition and workforce demographic that occurred between 1871 and 1921. The use of the newspaper to air this subject was said to have come about because 'the columns of a newspaper offer the only channel in which a poor servant may freely put his or her thoughts into plain words'.<sup>85</sup> The correspondence covered a range of issues and provided a broader scope of perspectives on servant-employer relations in the industry. However, the letters are not without their limitations, as the voices of male workers, male employers, casual staff, country house servants and domestics based in hotels and state institutions were in the minority. The correspondence, therefore, suggests that young maids in private households were most likely to experience and voice problems. Also, only those with strong opinions were likely to write into the newspaper. Yet a balanced account of the issue was provided, with correspondence recounting both positive experiences and highlighting flaws in the sector. Regardless of their shortcomings, newspapers have proved to be 'treasure troves of valuable material' on the domestic service industry.<sup>86</sup>

Given the Conservative outlook of the *Western Mail*, it is perhaps surprising that it became a key arena in which many servants could present their opinions and air grievances. However, the *Western Mail* had an important role in the domestic service sector in south Wales owing to its 'situations vacant' columns. Many readers, therefore, were directly involved with the industry, while developments in the domestic service relationship was also of wider interest. As household hierarchy echoed the structure of society, the deterioration in the service was believed to reflect the broader breakdown in the traditional organization of the country.<sup>87</sup> Leonore Davidoff summarises that the strict hierarchy of the house perpetuated 'an image of society built on a hierarchy of service. As king is to God, Lord is to King, so servant

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<sup>84</sup> 'A Servant's Grievance', *Western Mail*, 29 November 1892.

<sup>85</sup> 'A Butler', *Western Mail*, 7 December 1892.

<sup>86</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 258.

<sup>87</sup> L. Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England', *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974) p. 411.

is to master'.<sup>88</sup> It is also apt that it was this newspaper, established by the Third Marquis of Bute, John Crichton-Stuart in 1869, which helped publicise the need for a domestic service union.<sup>89</sup> Bute was heavily involved in supporting the work of various women's charities, having funded organisations such as 'The Covenant of the Good Sheppard' in 1872 to provide a home for 'penitent and destitute women'.<sup>90</sup> Twenty years later, in celebration of his silver wedding anniversary, he established a wedding dowry fund for impoverished servant girls seeking to marry, indicating his long-term interest in the problems plaguing the industry.

Locating relevant articles, correspondence and advertisements, has been made easier by the digitisation of newspapers. Adrian Bingham has argued that 'despite their political, social and cultural importance newspapers have not, on the whole featured prominently in histories of modern Britain'.<sup>91</sup> This he attributes to the 'inconvenience of accessing them and the difficulties of finding relevant material amongst the sheer quantity of content published'.<sup>92</sup> Both of these problems are remedied by the use of databases such as that of Gate Cengage Learning's Nineteenth Century British Newspapers, which facilitates access to a variety of local and national papers. Consequently, a diverse range of publications have been consulted, such as *The Daily News*, *John Bull*, *The Sporting Times*, *The Nottinghamshire Guardian* and *The Women's Herald*, demonstrating the breadth of interest in the sector. These have provided an insight into contemporary perceptions of Welsh servants and the significance of Wales in the wider British service industry. Specifically Welsh issues, for instance, the practice of bundling (courtship ritual), mop fairs (rural recruitment event), and linguistic and religious divides, were occasionally discussed in the British press along with the activities of notable individuals and charitable organisations. Digitisation is also thought to enable 'analysis to proceed in new ways' as more time can be spent evaluating the content of the newspapers as less time is taken up in finding relevant material.<sup>93</sup> This was

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> 'The Glamorgan Estate of Lord Bute Collection', [www.archiveswales.org.uk](http://www.archiveswales.org.uk), [accessed 25 February 2013].

<sup>90</sup> *Kelly's Trade Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London: Kelly's Directorie Ltd, 1901), p.139.

<sup>91</sup> A. Bingham, 'The Digitization of Newspaper Archives: Opportunities and Challenges for Historians', *Twentieth Century British History* 21 (2010), p. 225.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, p. 228.

especially true when tracing events and discussion threads in the press, such as the criminal trial of an Aberdare landlord in 1887, the opening of a servant home at Cardiff in 1891 and the calls for a south Wales servants' union in 1892.<sup>94</sup> However, the usefulness of digitisation to this study of domestic service is limited. Firstly, the industry is examined between 1871 and 1921, while only nineteenth-century newspapers have predominantly been made available online. As a result research on the last two decades necessitated the use of a microfilm machine. Likewise, while the use of a keyword search accelerated the research process to a certain extent, sifting through the search results was still time consuming. For example, between 1871 and 1900 the term 'domestic servant' appears 35,776 times, while some relevant material did not incorporate the term and so was not included in the search results. Therefore, more precision has been required which has necessitated prior knowledge of the issues examined. This has made the volume of material more manageable, for instance, there were 184 articles discussing the 'mop fair' method of recruitment, 99 relating to 'Rose Mary Crawshay', and only 28 results containing the phrase 'Bute Dowry'. Therefore, digitisation of the nineteenth-century press has had a significant impact on the use of newspapers as an historical source in this study.

Although local newspaper's correspondence has proved one method of accessing the personal testimony of servants and their employers, they have been complemented by a range of first-hand accounts, both published and archival. These have illuminated both the causal factors behind developments in the industry and the impact the wider trends had at a grass roots level. Although the daily experiences of servants are not central to this study, their testimony remains of value as domestics were best placed to observe the changing nature and function of the industry. However, this was predominantly coincidental information as it was never the intention of the servants to document changes in the sector but rather to communicate their own life stories. As a result much of the testimony is in the form of diaries and memoirs. Other accounts have been compiled as parts of larger studies that seek to uncover the lives of working-class women and give voice to those they perceived as

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<sup>94</sup> 'An Alleged Disorderly House at Aberdare', *Western Mail*, 16 November 1887; 'Salvation Army Social Work in Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 7 December 1899; 'Letters to the Editor', *Western Mail*, November to December 1892.



‘inarticulate’, ‘voiceless’ and ‘invisible’.<sup>95</sup> This is evident in an audio project compiled between 1974 and 1983, entitled *Women’s Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley*, as well as the 1931 anthology of writings published in *The Classic Life as We Have Known It: The Voices of Working-Class Women*.<sup>96</sup> However, it is ironic that women have been deemed silent and hidden, while it is the male voice that is often absent in the primary and secondary texts relating to the domestic service industry. There were several limitations surrounding the use of the oral history collection. Firstly, there was a need to be mindful of the era in which the interviews were conducted. During the 1970s and 80s feminism and left wing ideologies greatly influenced the development of oral history and shaped the character of the investigations conducted (see chapter four for further detail).<sup>97</sup> Their usefulness was further hampered by their recorded nature. As the interviews were not experienced first-hand it prohibited consideration of the performance (body language, setting etc) aspect of the accounts which has been though central to oral history studies.<sup>98</sup> However, the use of audio recordings, as opposed to written transcripts, ensured the retention of the authenticity and integrity of the material.<sup>99</sup> There also exists a need to be mindful of the wider issues surrounding oral history such as the fallibility of memory and the representativeness of the evidence. However, the two collections of first-hand accounts continue to provide a highly useful and informative insight into the industry as it operated in modest-income households in south Wales. This provides a stark contrast to archival accounts that predominantly outline the working experiences of staff stationed in more affluent homes, for example the diary of Margaret Mostyn Jones, a young servant on the Llanover Estate in Monmouthshire and the memoirs of Ada Carter, scullery maid at Dynevor Castle in Carmarthenshire.<sup>100</sup> Other fragments of information on less prestigious facets of the industry have emerged in the form of correspondence between the Matron of the

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<sup>95</sup> Waterson, *The Servants’ Hall*, pp. 6-7; Fairchild, *Domestic Enemies*, p. xiii; Scadden, ‘*Be Good Sweet Maid and Let Who Will Be Clever*’, p. 1.

<sup>96</sup> SWML: AUD/470-490, *Women’s Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley*, Audio Recordings; M. Llewelyn Davies, *The Classic Life as We Have Known It: The Voices of Working-Class Women* (St Ives: Virago Press, 2012).

<sup>97</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Oxford: Routledge, 2010) p. 155.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 153.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>100</sup> NLW: EX/1906, *The Reminiscences of Ada Carter*.

Cardiff Cottage Homes and former residents that had entered into service.<sup>101</sup> This has correlated with the information provided in extracts from, servant-keeper, Winn Anderson's autobiography, *A Rather Special Place*, which details recruitment methods (including the engagement of children from Cottage Homes) and provides a glimpse into the servant-employer relationship.<sup>102</sup> Although the reliability of her autobiography as an historical source cannot be assumed, given the fallibility of memory and the selectivity of information included, the account does reveal a useful depiction of service in Cardiff's docklands at the start of the twentieth century. Other published works, such as Wirt Sikes' 1881 travelogue, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales*, have also been useful in detailing the function of the 'mop fair' method of recruitment and its perception by Victorian society.<sup>103</sup> Sikes was the American Consul based in Cardiff during the late 1870s and wrote widely of Welsh history and culture.<sup>104</sup> However, these personal accounts are limited in that they only reflect the attitudes of individuals and are primarily focused on personal experience rather than providing a wider overview of events. Therefore, a careful reading is required in order to extract the valuable evidence they inadvertently reveal. The inclusion of both archival and published accounts, in the form of oral interviews and written testimony reveals a wider range of experiences that has facilitated a more extensive insight into the industry.

Contemporary novels and short-stories also feature prominently in this study. They give an insight into contemporary cultural depictions of service and facilitate an exploration of facets of the industry that would otherwise have been inaccessible. Of particular significance has been the works of Carmarthenshire-born writer Allen Raine (Anne Puddicombe). Her works, published between 1897 and 1908, document the everyday lives and romantic entanglements of the rural peasantry in South-West Wales, where she grew up and returned to in later-life.<sup>105</sup> Her work enjoyed significant contemporary popularity but has now been largely forgotten. Yet, the novels were once accredited with 'breaking down the [British] antipathy to stories

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<sup>101</sup> GA, SD/50/11/2, Cardiff Cottage Homes Register of Children Hired or Taken as Servants and Accompanying Correspondence between Servants, Employers and Guardians.

<sup>102</sup> W. Anderson, *A Rather Special Place: Growing up in Cardiff Dockland* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993).

<sup>103</sup> W. Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, Rivington, 1881).

<sup>104</sup> 'William Wirt Sikes', [www.ulib.niu.edu](http://www.ulib.niu.edu), [accessed 1 July 2014].

<sup>105</sup> S. Jones, *Writers of Wales: Allen Raine* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), pp. 2 and 22.

dealing with Wales'.<sup>106</sup> They sold widely up to the 1930s (she was the publisher Hutchinson's 'bestselling author of the 1890s') with three novels, *Torn Sails*, *By Berwyn Banks* and *A Welsh Singer*, even making it into film (now lost).<sup>107</sup> Her work no longer enjoys the popularity it once had only featuring in two academic studies of Anglo-Welsh literature, *In the Shadow of the Pulpit* and *Twentieth Century Women's Writing in Wales*. The neglect has been attributed to a combination of the romantic genre of the books, the lack of contemporary critical acclaim, the gender of the author, the date of publication and the rural subject matter.<sup>108</sup>

Although her depictions are fictional they provide a considerable degree of 'unwitting evidence' on the role of service in rural Welsh communities and are in stark contrast to the urban nature of other sources consulted.<sup>109</sup> Beyond the often stereotypical characterisation, Raine's novels illuminate the function and character of the industry and the nature of relationships between servants, their employers and the wider population. The author's own role as an employer of domestics and her lengthy association with rural Carmarthenshire provided her with firsthand knowledge of the industry and the inhabitants of the villages in which her stories were based. However, the novels have been examined with caution owing to problems surrounding subjectivity, realism and reception of ideas.<sup>110</sup> Nineteenth-century novels have conventionally been perceived as the product of a largely bourgeois culture, being written and read by the middle-class and often conveying a limited outlook on contemporary society.<sup>111</sup> In Raine's case the overtly romantic, wild and traditional image she portrays of Wales and the 'gwerin' (country folk) reflects a very idealised and quaint image of the country and its people. This was exceptionally popular with readers but confined the author in characterisation, imagery and plot lines. However, recent historical studies have asserted the importance of novels owing to the wealth of evidence they contain. Novels possess

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<sup>106</sup> Jones, *Writers of Wales*, pp. 25

<sup>107</sup> Jones, *Writers of Wales*, p. 34; BBC Wales Arts, *Welsh Film History 1910-1919*, [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk) [accessed 20 April 2012].

<sup>108</sup> Jones, *Writers of Wales*, pp. 1-2, 30. Sally Jones has argued that Raine's novels have been overlooked as they were published pre-1915. In this year Caradoc Evans' *My People* was published and this has traditionally been perceived as a landmark year in the development of Anglo-Welsh literature.

<sup>109</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> J. Reid, 'Novels' in D. Dobson & B. Ziemann, eds., *Reading Primary Sources: The Interpretation of Texts from Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century History* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009) pp. 159-174 on p. 159.

<sup>111</sup> Reid, 'Novels' p. 159.

the potential to serve not only as illustrative examples but if evaluated correctly can illuminate aspects of the past otherwise difficult to access. With the ascendancy of a print culture and the increasing accessibility of literature in the form of serials for instance, the nineteenth-century novel has been viewed as possessing a more universal popularity, enjoying a 'broader social base and appeal', with 'fluid and shifting boundaries between high and low culture, text and context, and fact and fiction'.<sup>112</sup> Many academic works on domestic service have incorporated examinations of texts such as P.G. Wodehouse's 'Jeeves novels', William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* especially when looking at servant stereotypes.<sup>113</sup> Raine's work is of great value, like many nineteenth-century novels, for the evidence that can be obtained from 'background details' as much as the deliberate aspects of the work, such as the plot itself.<sup>114</sup> The fact that her novels complement other sources demonstrates their reliability and the usefulness of these novels in a study of domestic service.

While the novels of Allen Raine had a distinctively rural focus, a wide variety of organisational documents have been consulted that are exclusively urban in origin. Many societies and charities were established in response to the dangers that had arisen in the 'anonymous' environment of the rapidly expanding towns and cities.<sup>115</sup> While the welfare of young female servants (especially migrant workers) was a frequent cause of public concern, the diverse approach to service adopted by religious organisations and philanthropic individuals was intended to alleviate wider social problems as much as assisting servants. The issues included prostitution, crime, orphaned children and impoverished unmarried genteel women. The archival records on such enterprises have proved highly fragmentary and vary in the quality of the detail they include. Therefore, they have been used in conjunction with press accounts, census enumerator records and published pamphlets in an attempt to make sense of the immense charitable activity that surrounded the sector. The majority of

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<sup>112</sup> Reid, 'Novels' p. 161.

<sup>113</sup> L. Delap, 'Kitchen Sink Laughter: Domestic Service Humour in Twentieth-Century Britain' in *Journal of British Studies* 49 (2010) p.639; Turner, *What the Butler Saw*, pp. 11, 165 and 209; M. Beetham, 'Domestic Servants as Poachers of Print: Reading, Authority and Resistance in Late Victorian Britain' in L. Delap et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 189.

<sup>114</sup> J. Flanders, *The Victorian House* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004) p. xx; Jones, *Writers of Wales*, p. 80.

<sup>115</sup> G. T. Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 164.

the material relates to Cardiff-based initiatives, providing a rare glimpse into the scale and scope of the philanthropic endeavours in one town. The Salvation Army's register of women entering their Cardiff homes during the 1890s has proved to be one of the most useful archival documents consulted. The admission forms for the Salvation Army Receiving Home in Moira Terrace provided considerable space for 'receiving officers' to outline the girls' personal history and provide progress updates of the women while in residence.<sup>116</sup> As a result they provide an insight into the role of the organisation, the lives of the women entering the homes, and the opinions of the officers that completed the register.

The records of other groups such as The Girls Friendly Society and The North Wales Temperance Society are less complete.<sup>117</sup> Other benevolent initiatives were undertaken by notable Welsh figures, for instance the Third Marquis of Bute, who set up a dowry fund for maids seeking to marry.<sup>118</sup> This was established in 1898 to celebrate his silver wedding anniversary and sought to assist worthy servants based in Cardiff. Other schemes, such as the 'lady-help' programme, initiated during the 1870s by Lady Rose Mary Crawshay of Cyfarthfa Castle, sought to find light domestic work for destitute gentle-women.<sup>119</sup> Although her project had limited success it became a popular subject of discussion. The related documents reveal the attempts made to combat the servant shortage and the breadth of interest in the industry. Other organisational documents consulted relate to training facilities such as the Glyn Neath Domestic Science Centre and the School of Cookery for South Wales and Monmouthshire.<sup>120</sup> These give an indication of the high number of entry routes into the sector and the social response to the limited supply of trained young maids. The limited success of such organisations and schemes also reveal how the lack of regulation shaped the industry. Therefore, despite the problematic nature of many of the sources, when considered in their totality they provide a valuable portrayal of the sector and those connected to it.

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<sup>116</sup> SAIHCA: Cardiff Receiving Home Admission Forms, Moira Terrace.

<sup>117</sup> CCL: GIR, Girls Friendly Society, Llandaff Diocese Annual Reports, 1982; Gathering the Jewels: Welsh Temperance Society Poster, [www.tlysau.org.uk](http://www.tlysau.org.uk) [accessed 15 October 2012].

<sup>118</sup> CCL: LC:392.5 BUT, The Third Marquis of Bute's Silver Wedding Dowry Fund, Origins of the Dowry and List of Recipients, 1898-1989.

<sup>119</sup> LSE: HD6/D41, R. M. Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen: A Record of Experience and Success- with additional matter*, Selected Pamphlets 1877.

<sup>120</sup> WGAS: E/N/13/4/1, Glyn Neath Domestic Science Centre: Head Teacher's Logbook 1916-1923; GA: GD/E/18/22, Domestic Science Centre: Conference Reports.

The first chapter examines the size of the industry and its development in south Wales between 1871 and 1921. It will be demonstrated that domestic service was a large and expanding economic sector up to the start of the First World War. Its decline as a proportion of the wider Welsh workforce is attributed to the splintering of constituent occupations and a slowdown in the percentage of young girls entering the sector as 'maids of all work'. Employer demand remained high throughout the period owing to the expansion in leisure, the role of municipal governance, and the number of middle-class inhabitants. A high level of demand formed an instrumental factor in the industry's evolving occupational composition. As a result contemporary classifications of service transferred from a focus on duties performed to the type of establishment in which the domestics worked. In the second chapter the changing character of servants and their employers is analysed. Issues such as age, marital status, and parenthood are considered in order to understand the appeal of service to different social groups, the reasons for recruiting domestic workers and how socioeconomic conditions influenced the demographic of the industry's workforce in the three-case study towns. It will be argued that servants in south Wales can be classified into three life-stage categories 'long-term career' servants, 'stop-gap' workers and 'indigent seniors'. By the twentieth century the proportion of 'stop-gap' workers had declined as the sector accommodated an increasing number of 'indigent seniors' often engaged in casual and part-time positions. A change in recruitment methods accompanied the transition in worker demographic as will be demonstrated in chapter three. It is argued that entry routes into the sector increasingly developed from informal means such as 'word of mouth' and local hiring fairs to more long distance and impersonal methods such as recruitment agencies and newspaper advertisements. In response to the perceived dangers facing young workers, especially those who migrated from their home communities, a number of charitable initiatives were established to facilitate their safe entry into the sector. Yet, the majority of such schemes were motivated as much by the need to remedy wider social problems as the desire to assist domestics. Consequently the industry became a popular tool for nineteenth-century benevolent schemes. While this augmented the lower ranks of the industry it also had a detrimental impact on the status of the workforce.

The fourth chapter explores the relationship between gender and domestic service. It will be argued that the industry may have been feminised, but did not actively undergo a feminisation process as the proportion of male servants in south Wales continually increased up to 1911. Nineteenth-century gender ideals, of male breadwinners and female homemakers, also had a significant impact on contemporary perceptions of servants. While male domestics encountered accusations of effeminacy, promiscuity and drunkenness, maids were often deemed immoral and untrustworthy. National stereotypes, disseminated by the Report of the Commissioners of the Enquiry into the State of Education in Wales (Blue Books), also adversely influenced the perception of Welsh servants. However, the relationship between gender and domestic service has proved incredibly complex. The accusations of effeminacy were countered by the skilled and outdoor nature of most male service positions in south Wales. Meanwhile, domestic service remained one of the most socially acceptable forms of female employment owing to its connection with domesticity. Yet, the industry did not simply reinforce the connection between women and the home but also facilitated the participation in the Welsh economy. Likewise the servant-employer relationship was also somewhat less than straightforward as demonstrated in the final chapter. Although social class intensified some of the problems in the sector, the lack of regulation was the central issue that influenced the interactions between householders and their staff. As a result both parties were rendered vulnerable with mistresses lamenting substandard staff and servants resenting harsh conditions and poor treatment. The five aspects studied provide an insight into the character and function of the industry and its workforce during a key period in its development.

## **‘Servants Wanted’: The Growth and Occupational Transition of the Domestic Service Sector.**

Central to our understanding of domestic service as an industry is the identification of a distinct and quantifiable workforce with a discernible occupation structure and pay scale. This facilitates a deeper appreciation of the character of the sector and its role in the economy and society of south Wales. Size and occupational composition had a significant impact on contemporary perceptions of service, worker experience and the social groups from which both servants and employers were drawn. This chapter firstly demonstrates that domestic service was a large and important Welsh industry, employing 110,238 people at its height in 1891.<sup>1</sup> In contrast to England, which had 73,848 fewer domestics in 1911 than it had in 1871, the Welsh sector had increased by 15,259 servants. Although domestic service declined in both countries as a proportion of the wider workforce, this can be attributed in part to the splintering of constituent occupations from the industry and the modification of the census employment categories.<sup>2</sup>

It is then argued that domestic service expanded in south Wales owing to the high level of employer demand that continuously exceeded servant availability. It was stimulated by both an expansion in the number of middle-class inhabitants and the creation of public institutions and leisure facilities. Schools, hotels, restaurants and hospitals all required domestic labour to clean, cook or wait on members of the public. This led to more competition for staff and helped foster fears of a servant shortage.<sup>3</sup> The impact of these developments on the occupational composition of the sector is then explored. A case-study of the census enumerators’ books for Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, have indicated that the movement of domestic service out of private households into the public arena, was a key feature of the industry. The number of traditional household posts declined and was superseded by servants based in public institutions and businesses. Consequently, contemporaries began to classify domestic servants in accordance with their place of work rather than the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics, Vol. 1.* (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press, 1985) p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> P. Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women* (London, Hodder and Stoughton Educational, 1996) pp. 53-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 51.



nature of the duties performed. Therefore, perceiving service in terms of the traditional country-house hierarchy provides too narrow a focus. Instead, the type and size of the establishment in which servants were engaged should form the main way of conceptualising the industry. While old specialist job titles remained, they increasingly masked huge variations in duties performed. The case-study has also revealed that the rate of change varied in response to the social and economic character of different localities. Finally, an exploration of servant wages has been undertaken. It has been demonstrated that pay rates varied according to the type of establishment, the number of servants employed and degree of specialisation (not always determined by job title). Consequently, domestic service has emerged from both national and regional studies as a significant and dynamic Welsh industry.

While it has been widely acknowledged by historians that domestic service was the dominant female industry during the nineteenth century, there has been disagreement over the exact level of servant employment in Britain and the factors that influenced its decline. Domestic service accounted for 54.3 percent of occupied women in Wales and 38.8 percent of employed females in England in 1871.<sup>4</sup> Even in 1911 domestic service still accounted for 8.6 percent fewer members of the English than the Welsh female workforce. This can be attributed to a range of social and economic differences, such as the more rural nature of Wales that generated a reliable supply of young maids.<sup>5</sup> This was exacerbated by the decline in the number of agricultural positions that induced many workers to migrate to urban centres in search of work.<sup>6</sup> Fewer alternative forms of female employment and the dominance of traditional gender doctrine also rendered service imperative to the local female labour market.<sup>7</sup> The 1871 census recorded the highest proportion of servants in the British female population, 12.8 percent. Yet Frank Dawes has suggested that, 1891, the year when the number of servants was at its peak was of more significance.<sup>8</sup> The fall in the number of domestics recorded in the subsequent censuses, from 1.5 million

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 51.

<sup>7</sup> W. G. Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation: The Welsh Experience 1847-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), pp. 13 and 32.

<sup>8</sup> P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975) p. 27; M. Ebery, and B. Preston, *Geographical Papers: Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 1871-1914* (Reading: University of Reading, 1976), p. 20; F.V. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: A True Portrait of Upstairs, Downstairs Life* (London: Century in Association with the National Trust, 1973) p. 164.

in 1891 to 1.3 million in 1911, led Dawes to argue that service was in decline by the start of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> Paula Bartley has questioned this trend, arguing that the perceived decline was 'nothing more than greater precision by census enumerators who took more care in distinguishing between women's work'.<sup>10</sup> She claims that the number of domestics recorded in the mid-nineteenth century had been inflated by the classification of all women working at residential premises as servants, including housewives, shop assistants and traditional craft workers.<sup>11</sup>

The subsequent impact of the First World War on the size of the domestic service industry has also been highly contested. For some historians the conflict was a major catalyst in the contraction of the sector. Dawes claimed that 1914 was when 'the rot finally set in', elevating the servant shortage from a national problem to a 'national crisis'.<sup>12</sup> Yet, the First World War is also thought to have changed the nature of domestic service rather than initiating its eradication, particularly signalling the end of the 'middle-class live-in servant' and the rise of the daily cleaner.<sup>13</sup> However, Deirdre Beddoe and Gail Braybon, have both refuted the idea that the conflict was such a significant turning point as the interwar depression, lack of welfare provision and demobilisation of troops, combined with social pressure and a limited number of alternative jobs forced women back into service regardless of personal preference.<sup>14</sup> This effectively ensured that domestic service continued until, at the very least, the advent of the Second World War.

This chapter is heavily reliant on official census data to reveal the size and character of domestic service. A statistical survey of the *Western Mail's* situations vacant columns, have also been examined in conjunction with newspaper articles and personal testimony to unearth high levels of employer demand for servants. Meanwhile, job advertisements and first-hand accounts have exposed the expansion of service beyond private households and the decline in specialist positions. The

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<sup>9</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p 164.

<sup>10</sup> Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, pp. 30 and 164.

<sup>13</sup> T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820- 1920* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976) p. 111; S. Todd 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900-1950', *Past and Present*, 28 (2009), p. 181.

<sup>14</sup> D. Beddoe, 'Munitionettes, Maids and Mams: Women in Wales, 1914-1939' in A.V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1839* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), pp. 187- 188; G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, (London: Routledge, 1989) pp. 181-183.

situations vacant have also been analysed in an attempt to uncover the servant pay scale in south Wales. This combination of historical evidence facilitates both a numerical overview of the sector and a detailed examination of the underlying causal factors. Firstly, to examine the growth of the servant workforce in south Wales, the census occupational tables have been closely scrutinised. A quantitative analysis of the census enumerators' books have also been undertaken to provide a more in-depth look at the industry's changing occupational composition and to avoid the classification problems that have been identified in previous British studies.<sup>15</sup> This has taken the form of a case-study of servant occupations in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen. The reliability of census data is limited by the accuracy of the terms employed, for instance 'general' and 'domestic' were occasionally used to refer to a range of servant roles, while casual and part-time posts were often omitted from the records completely (or else not declared).<sup>16</sup> However, they remain the most reliable source of information on the domestic service workforce during the nineteenth and early-twentieth century.

The regional approach provides the clearest insight into the occupational composition of the sector and how it was shaped by the nature of the locality in which it functioned. These towns differed greatly in their locations, population demographic and economies. Aberdare is located on the south Wales coalfield and had the largest population of the three case-study towns. As the coal industry expanded migration into the town increased and its population grew dramatically. *The Post Office Directory of Monmouth and South Wales 1871* lists Aberdare's industries as 'breweries, brass and iron foundries, a tannery, also a flannel manufactory, collieries and iron works'.<sup>17</sup> The increased dominance of coal mining is perceptible when comparing this account to that provided in *Kelly's Directory* of 1901 where it states simply that 'collieries are continually being opened in the

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<sup>15</sup> E. Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', *Journal of Social History* 8 (1983) pp. 201-210; R. Gant, 'Domestic Service in a Small Market Town: Crickhowell, 1851-1901', *Local Population Studies* 84 (2010), p. 16; E. Roberts, *Women's Work 1840- 1940* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), pp. 9-10.

<sup>16</sup> Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', pp. 201-210; R. Gant, 'Domestic Service in a Small Market Town', p. 16; E. Roberts, *Women's Work 1840- 1940* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988) pp. 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> *The Post Office Directory of Monmouthshire and the Principal Towns and Places in South Wales* (London: Kelly an Co, 1871).

surrounding district; the collieries afford employment to many thousands of persons, and give the town its chief support'.<sup>18</sup>

Being situated just south of the coalfield, Bridgend had a more mixed economy while its hinterlands consisted of both small agricultural communities and coal mining villages.<sup>19</sup> In 1871 the town was said to have included 'a brewery, a tannery, and iron and brass foundry; also a manufactory for making agricultural implements; lime is also manufactured here to a large extent'.<sup>20</sup> However, by 1920 the variety of sectors had contracted to brewery, iron and brass foundry, and lime quarrying. Bridgend also had a significant role as a market town and an administrative centre for the local district.<sup>21</sup> Yet, its proximity to the coalfield and to the larger towns of Cardiff and Swansea appears to have restricted its size and development with it possessing the smallest population of the three towns. Paradoxically, it also benefited from its location. It was conveniently placed to home new state institutions such as hospitals and proved a prime location with good transport links for white collar commuters.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast, Carmarthen had a more westerly and isolated location. Its economy was largely characterised by its rural setting and agricultural hinterlands. Like Bridgend, Carmarthen also appeared to undergo a contraction in its industries. In 1871 its 'staple trades' were listed as fishing, 'woollen, weaving, malting, tanning, rope making, iron foundries and the tin works', yet by 1901 fishing and farming were the only notable aspects of its economy as the old trades began to decline.<sup>23</sup> However, Carmarthen also had an important role as a college town and was the location of a number of important institutions such as a teacher training college, a Presbyterian college and a number of affiliated charity and endowed schools.<sup>24</sup> This is particularly significant in the study of domestic service as it has been argued that the presence of universities and colleges in a town led to a heightened number of

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<sup>18</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London: Kelly's Directorie Ltd, 1901).

<sup>19</sup> Light, 'Of inestimable value to the town and district?' p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> *The Post Office Directory* (1871).

<sup>21</sup> H. J. Randall, *Bridgend: The Story of a Market Town* (Newport: R. H. Johns Ltd, 1955), p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> Light, J. 'Of inestimable value to the town and district?' *A Study of the Urban Middle-Classes in South Wales with Particular Reference to Pontypool, Bridgend and Penarth c. 1850-1890* (Cardiff University: PhD Thesis, 2003) p. 33.

<sup>23</sup> *The Post Office Directory* (1871); *Kelly's Directory* (1901).

<sup>24</sup> W. Spurrell, *Carmarthen and its Neighbourhood* (1860) pp. 28-31.

servants.<sup>25</sup> The 'situation vacant' column of the *Western Mail* also provides clear evidence of the disparities between the levels of supply and demand in the area. This is supported by a number of articles and published letters to the newspaper's editor outlining the difficulty in recruiting servants and the high level of staff turnover. Personal testimony in the form of audio recordings of Women's Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley, and a selection of published accounts featured in the anthology, *Life as We Have Known It* have both revealed the high level of demand through illustrating the ease with which domestics found new positions.<sup>26</sup>

Domestic service was a significant and enduring sector of the Welsh economy. Between 1871 and 1911 the servant workforce expanded from 90,029 to 105,288.<sup>27</sup> This contrasts greatly with the experience of the sector in England, as during the same period servant numbers declined from 1,387,872 to 1,314,024. Although the industry reached a peak figure of 110,238 in 1891, the subsequent decline can be attributed to changes in the classification of domestics in the census enumerators' books.<sup>28</sup> The 1901 census report explained that

The figures for 1901 show...a remarkable decrease in the proportion of occupied females. Careful investigation has revealed a cause, which is worthy of notice here, since it reveals the danger of the hasty comparisons between figures compiled at different times. It appears that part of the decrease among females has occurred under Domestic Indoor Service. Some of this decrease is only apparent, as will appear clear in the following explanation: In 1881, and at earlier Censuses, daughters and other female relatives of the Head of a Family, who were described as assisting in household duties, were classified among the unoccupied. In 1891, however, it was considered that, the nature of the daily occupations of such persons being thus evident, they would be properly reckoned as in Domestic Service. As in many other questions of statistical classification, there is much to be said in favour of either view; and when precedent has been set at one Census there is obvious convenience in following it at the next. In deciding on the rules for the guidance of the clerks at the recent Census we, however, came to the conclusion that on the whole it would be better to revert to the method of 1881.<sup>29</sup>

Therefore, a general impression of domestic service as a gradually expanding industry in Wales emerges from the census results. Although the English figures also

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<sup>25</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> SWML: AUD/470-490, Women's' Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley, Audio Recordings; M. Llewelyn Davies, *The Classic Life as We Have Known It: The Voices of Working-Class Women* (St Ives: Virago Press, 2012).

<sup>27</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, p. 96.

<sup>28</sup> M. Woolard, 'The Classification of Domestic Servants in England and Wales 1851-1951' (Oslo: *Proceedings of the Servant Project*, volume II, 2002), [www.essex.ac.uk](http://www.essex.ac.uk) [accessed 15 May 2013].

<sup>29</sup> 1901 *Census of England and Wales*, General Report with appendices, pp. 76-7 found in Woolard, 'The Classification of Domestic Servants'.

increased sharply in 1891 with a subsequent decline in 1901 there were no signs of recovery in 1911. This suggests that the sector in England was in decline from 1891 (possibly even 1881) onwards. The British trend identified in most secondary studies reflects the English pattern, with high employment figures in the late-nineteenth century followed by a contraction thereafter.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the increase in the number of servants, it contracted as a proportion of the wider workforce. However, contemporary changes in the categorisation of service occupations by casts doubt on the notion that service experienced such a dramatic decline after 1891. As individual occupations expanded they often splintered away from the industry creating the impression that the sector was contracting. For instance, in early census tables 'nurses (not domestic)' were regarded as servants. This evolved into 'domestics in hospitals, institutions and benevolence societies', with medical nurses themselves, being eliminated from the industry. Gardeners also experienced re-classification in the census, from being regarded as one homogenous group to being split between domestic gardeners and non-domestic gardeners, the latter also eventually failed to be incorporated. These changes give credence to Paula Bartley's suggestion that the decline in servant numbers after 1891 may have been related to the 'greater precision' of census enumerators in distinguishing between the types of work.<sup>31</sup> It is, therefore, possible that the decline of domestic service was in part the result of the exclusion of occupational groups such as medical nurses and barmaids. As a result of these changes it appears that the proportion of workers in the sector was in decline when it was the classification of occupations that had changed.

The growth of domestic service in south Wales reflects the rapid expansion of the coal industry in the late-nineteenth century.<sup>32</sup> This led to a growth in population size and generated greater prosperity. The impact of industrialisation on the number of domestics can be clearly observed in the county figures. Glamorgan experienced the most significant increase in servant numbers from 20,494 in 1871 to 37,350 in 1911.<sup>33</sup> By the end of the study period it accounted for over a third (35 percent) of all domestics in Wales. This was partly the result of the affluence produced by the area's

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<sup>30</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 27; Ebery, and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 20; Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 164.

<sup>31</sup> Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>32</sup> J. Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised? Essays in Modern Welsh History* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1995) p 17.

<sup>33</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, p. 113.

industrialisation which stimulated demand for domestic help, while the prevalence of nonconformity and the dominance of heavy industry also increased the number of servants through restricting the range of acceptable female positions. In contrast, the number of domestics in Carmarthenshire fell from 7,030 to 7,012. The variation in trends between Glamorgan and its more rural neighbour demonstrates the influence of the wider economy on the development of domestic service.

Differences are also visible at a town level as evident in the case-study of Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen. All three had the greatest number of servants in 1891 but the level of change varied considerably during the period as demonstrated in Figure I.I. Carmarthen had the most domestics in the fifteen streets sampled, reflecting its role as a college town.<sup>34</sup> University and college towns often had a large number of servants owing to the ready supply of lodgers and boarding house occupants.<sup>35</sup> It also experienced the most dramatic decline after 1891 reflecting a contraction in the total population of the town from 12,926 to 10,221 between 1871 and 1921.<sup>36</sup> Bridgend and Aberdare had a similar number of domestics resident in the fifteen case-study streets. Bridgend experienced a less pronounced change in servant figures possibly owing to the older administrative role of the region. As an industrial area, Aberdare experienced a more marked growth, reflecting the increase in the wider population from 36,112 to 55,067 by 1921.<sup>37</sup> The variations between towns, counties and countries demonstrate the way domestic service was shaped by the social and economic conditions of the locality in which it functioned and reveals how it became such an important industry in Wales.

Historians have been greatly divided over whether supply or demand was the main factor that influenced the size of the domestic service industry. Both Pamela Horn and Theresa McBride have argued that rising living costs in the late nineteenth-century led many householders to limit their expenditure on domestic labour.<sup>38</sup> However, Edward Higgs has disputed the claim that financial hardship amongst the bourgeoisie was significant enough to inhibit their engagement of domestics.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen (1871, 1891 and 1911).

<sup>35</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian England*, p. 26.

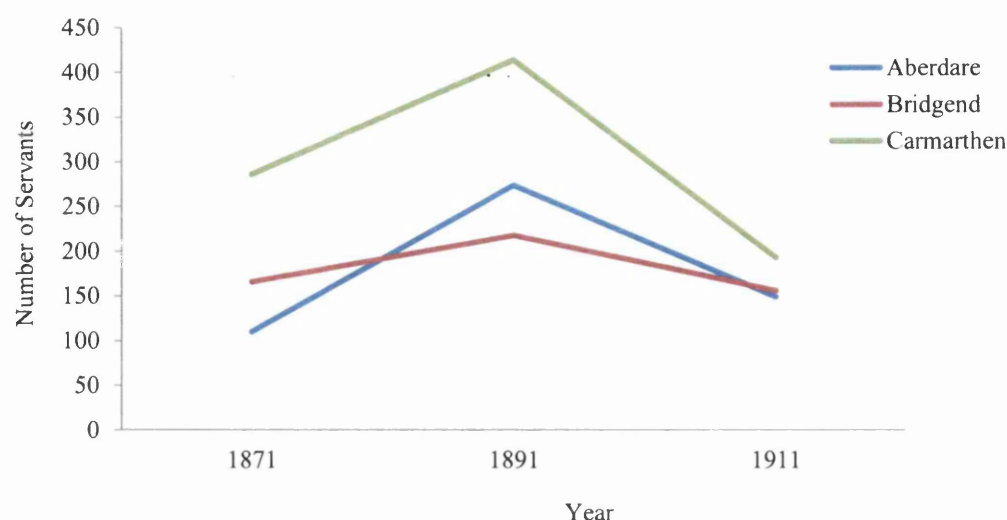
<sup>36</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, p.62.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, p.63.

<sup>38</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 28; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 114.

<sup>39</sup> Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', p. 204.

Figure 1.1. Number of domestic servants present in the three case-study towns.



Source: Census of England and Wales, 1871, 1891 and 1911

Changes in family life have also been believed to have reduced the demand for household assistants. A declining birth rate and an increasing desire for privacy meant that fewer servants were wanted or needed.<sup>40</sup> The middle-class family was said to have turned ‘inward’ on itself as domesticity became ‘increasingly expressed as a closeness and exclusiveness which could no longer tolerate an obtrusive stranger’.<sup>41</sup> Higgs, once again, has proved most vociferous in challenging the impact of changing domestic values on the engagement of domestic servants. He points to the reluctance of British employers to embrace new domestic technology, the lack of correlation between family size and number of servants employed, and the reluctance of mistresses to forfeit that role even during periods of financial hardship, as evidence that there was no decline in demand for servants.<sup>42</sup>

The supply of domestics was thought to have been particularly curtailed by the expansion in working-class education. Compulsory school attendance from 1870 led to an increase in the number of schools. There were just twenty listed in *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* in 1871, by 1920 the number had

<sup>40</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 114.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Higgs, ‘Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England’, p. 204.



increased to ninety.<sup>43</sup> It was feared that improved access to education, 'not only kept the very young out of the labour force; but it also provided them with the basic skills which expanded their occupational options'.<sup>44</sup> Margaret Beetham has argued that the expansion of education was perceived as a 'sign of the collapse of domestic authority', while Turner has suggested that contemporaries believed board school teachers sharpened 'class-consciousness and inculcated in the young a distaste for domestic service'.<sup>45</sup> Yet, education was not only held responsible for the inadequate supply of domestics but also the poor attitude of girls that entered the workforce. This was evident in the account of one servant-employer in Cardiff who told of the 'great mischief' that 'lies in school board teaching' as girls are:

trained to consider themselves far above the occupations of servants, and, in some instances, when engaging to fulfil, the offices of servants coolly ask if they have time to practice their music on your piano. Talk of introducing pianos into board schools! Where will poor "Mistresses" be able to find a servant capable or qualified to take upon her the usual and necessary offices of a servant?<sup>46</sup>

The introduction of compulsory education coincided with an expansion in the range of jobs open to young women. In the nineteenth century, new avenues of employment had begun to emerge; mass production created jobs in factories; typewriting saw the start of women entering clerical work; Florence Nightingale had made nursing a socially acceptable form of employment; and the development of services such as the postal telegraph and the increasing popularity of shopping, all gave women an increasing number of alternatives to domestic service.<sup>47</sup> For, instance, between 1871 and 1911 the proportion of women engaged in 'professional occupations' and 'food, drink and lodgings' increased in prominence.<sup>48</sup> The First World War also provided impetus for many women to make the change and experience new spheres of employment.<sup>49</sup> Despite the temporary nature of the developments, they broadened many young women's' horizons and effectively

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<sup>43</sup> Kelly's *Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London: Kelly's Directory Ltd, 1920); *The Post Office Directory of Monmouthshire and the Principal Towns and Places in South Wales* (London: Kelly and Co, 1871).

<sup>44</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 115.

<sup>45</sup> E. S. Turner, *What the Butler Saw: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Servant Problem* (London: Penguin Publishers, 2001) p. 233; M. Beetham, 'Domestic Servants as Poachers of Print: Reading, Authority and Resistance in Late Victorian Britain' in Delap et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) p. 187.

<sup>46</sup> 'Experience of Sixty Years, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 19 December 1892.

<sup>47</sup> Turner, *What the Butler Saw*, p. 233.

<sup>48</sup> Williams, *Was Wales Industrialised?* p. 65.

<sup>49</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 164.

highlighted the flaws in the service industry such as long hours and restricted freedom.<sup>50</sup> Although Dawes has argued that there was no revolution in social attitudes post 1918, Delap has suggested that the 'institution' of domestic service became increasingly incompatible with modern ideals and 'new ideas of democracy and equality'.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, changing aspirations and the fall of deference bred a general resentment of domestic service in many young workers which paved the way for their entry into alternative sectors in the mid-twentieth century.

The expansion of domestic service in Wales was the result of both high employer demand and a continuous supply of new recruits. However, the inability of servant supply to keep up with the growth in demand had the most significant impact on the size of the industry. Figure I.II. shows that the number of advertisements placed in the *Western Mail* by employers seeking to recruit servants ('situations vacant') was continuously higher than those by domestics seeking new positions ('situations wanted').<sup>52</sup> This was especially notable during the war years when the number of 'situations wanted' diminished significantly, with a maximum of only one or two being published most days. This was in stark contrast to the high number of employers seeking domestics via the *Western Mail's* advertisement columns. In 1911, an average of 78 positions were advertised daily; however, by 1914 the figure had increased to 161.<sup>53</sup> Although the number of vacancies declined to 103 in 1916 and just 84 in 1918, they never fell as low as they had been in 1911 and continued to rise in the post-war years. A growth in positions advertised at the start of the First World War would suggest a decline in the supply of servants as many domestics entered the military or found employment in war work (depending on age and gender). The subsequent fall in the quantity of advertisements reflected the fact that the feared cessation of domestic service did not materialise. Although there were 400,000 fewer servants in 1918 than there had been in the British industry four years earlier, the decline was not as dramatic as expected with 1.2 million servants remaining in the sector.<sup>54</sup> Unsurprisingly, the most significant contraction was in the

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<sup>50</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 152; Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, pp. 181-3.

<sup>51</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p.165; Delap, 'Kitchen Sink Laughter', p. 624.

<sup>52</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921.

<sup>53</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 1914.

<sup>54</sup> L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p. 145.

proportion of male positions being advertised. At the start of the conflict outdoor male posts accounted for twelve percent of all vacancies appearing in the *Western Mail*. Yet by the end of the First World War, they constituted only four percent of positions.<sup>55</sup> Rather than a drop in demand, many potential employers may have decided against advertising, resigning themselves to life without a gardener, groom or chauffeur for the duration of the conflict.

Like the official census figures for England and Wales, there was a marked peak in the number of advertisements in the late-nineteenth century, which would suggest that census occupational classification amendments were not the sole reason for the significantly higher level of servants recorded in the 1891 census. However, caution should be employed when interpreting job advertisements as an indication of the changing size of the sector in south Wales. The number of advertisements placed reflects the popularity of the newspaper as a method of servant recruitment as much as it provides an insight into employment levels in the industry. However, Figure I.II conclusively shows that vacancies for domestic helpers were plentiful between 1871 and 1921. So extensive was demand that a journalist described how:

one hears that servants cannot be procured, or, if procured, that they have developed the all too human tendency of doing what they ought not and leaving undone that which it is their duty to do. From Land's End to John o Groat's and from Cargybi to Caerdydd the melancholy cry goes up, and the "wants" columns of the newspapers groan in vain with appeal of mistresses.<sup>56</sup>

There were 18,783 fewer recorded servants in Wales in 1921 than there had been ten years earlier and fears over servant shortages were given additional impetus by the granting of an unemployment allowance to female munitions workers in the aftermath of the First World War. One 'Cardiff Citizen' wrote to the newspaper to voice his concern, describing how 'the great cry at present in Cardiff and throughout the country is for domestic servants. The daily papers are crowded with advertisements for servants; yet how can any employer expect to have any reply when girls get 25s a week for doing nothing?'<sup>57</sup> A weekly column entitled 'The Ways of Women: What Women are Thinking About' also argued that the supply of

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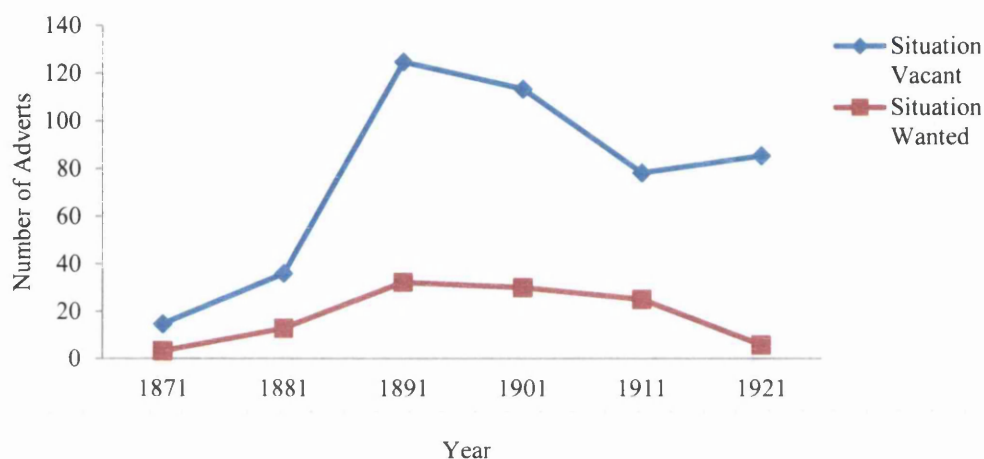
<sup>55</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 1914 and 1918.

<sup>56</sup> 'The Servant Problem', *Western Mail*, 9 June 1900.

<sup>57</sup> 'Domestic Servants and the Unemployment Donation', *Western Mail*, 4 April 1919.

servants was failing to meet employer demand.<sup>58</sup> The anonymous female writer argued that ‘our lives and households are so regulated as to depend entirely upon the services of people who are becoming more and more unwilling to give those services. Now I don’t profess a knowledge of political economy but common-sense tells us that a demand must be withdrawn if there is no supply’.<sup>59</sup> This indicates a potent fear amongst employers of not being able to recruit domestic staff.

Figure I.II. Servant vacancy advertisements published in the *Western Mail*.



Source: Situation Vacant Advertisement Columns, *Western Mail*, 1871-1921.

A high level of demand for servants was a continuous feature of the industry in south Wales between 1871 and 1921. This was exacerbated by high servant turnover as most domestics failed to remain in the sector and frequently held individual positions for only a short duration of time. The high turnover suggests that a considerable number of vacancies were available as many girls were able to resign their positions without fear of being able to locate another. An interview conducted with Swansea maid, Bessie Hopkins revealed that she had five employers in a few short years prior to the First World War, with each post lasting between three and sixteen months. New posts were easily obtained, as she recollected when explaining why she remained with an overly-demanding mistress for so long, ‘three or four of their [her old employers] friends asked me if I would go and work with them. I could have gone I think perhaps I would have had a better place but you don’t like jumping

<sup>58</sup> ‘The Ways of Women: What Women Are Thinking About’, *Western Mail*, 10 March 1900.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

from one job to another and I was near my sister and I was young. She was keeping an eye on me you see'.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, her decision to remain was the result of personal preference rather than a shortage of employers. Bessie's account suggests that finding employment was easy owing to the high level of demand in south Wales.

The notion of a supply shortage, much feared by employers, was exacerbated by the high turnover of domestic staff. So widely recognised was the problem that in Bridgend special recognition was made of long-serving domestics in order to engender servant loyalty to one employer.<sup>61</sup> In the town's annual show, organised by the Labourers' Friend Society, prizes were given to the servant who had remained in their post for the longest duration. In 1878 first place was given to Mary Jenkins who had spent thirty-eight years with her employer, Joseph Brombill.<sup>62</sup> Another category existed for female servants under 21 years of age. The winner in this category was Mary Ann Edmunds who had served Richard Jones from Pencoed for six years. A third category also awarded a prize to a manservant or agricultural labourer under 21 years of age who had once again, remained with the same employer for the longest duration. In this instance the winner was William David who had been in the employ of a Dr Pritchard for eight years.<sup>63</sup> The creation of the award suggests that such feats of service were the exception and not the rule and indicates that servant loyalty and constancy were highly valued by contemporaries.

The changing classification of servants to place of work rather than by duties undertaken is reflected in the occupational categories employed in the *Western Mail* and census enumerators' book. The situation vacant columns reveal an increasing number of domestic service occupations.<sup>64</sup> As the number of positions advertised increased the newspaper began to change the layout of its job advertisement columns. In 1871 all adverts were printed together under the headings of 'situations vacant' or 'situations required'.<sup>65</sup> By 1881, servants had become the first group of workers to have adverts published in its own specific section, such was its popularity. Twenty years later increasingly specialised domestic service sub-sections had been introduced and in the aftermath of the First World War, the term 'domestic servant'

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<sup>60</sup> SWML: AUD/482, Women's' Work Experiences.

<sup>61</sup> 'Mr, Talbot, M.P. and the Bridgend Labourers' Friend Society', *Western Mail*, 16 November 1878.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921.

<sup>65</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 1871.

was abandoned entirely and individual headings such as 'hotel assistants', 'general servants' and 'farm hands' were used in place of the previous sub-sections.<sup>66</sup> No other newspaper, either local or national, has been discovered with such a sophisticated classification system, signifying the importance of the paper to the industry in south Wales. The perpetual need to re-classify is suggestive of three developments: the increasing size of the domestic service industry; the increasing popularity of the vacancy columns; and the movement of servants out of private households. For instance, in 1901 positions located in commercial establishments were already regarded as an entirely separate category entitled 'hotel assistants'. This change indicated a tendency to separate institutional and residential staff as the former section expanded. Yet, the census tables continued to recognise institutional and commercial staff as part of the industry. At the start of the study period all such workers were listed in the census as 'inn servants'. By its end, they were more accurately described as 'domestics in hotels, lodging and eating houses', while barmaids had been excluded from the service workforce. This indicates an increasingly complex method of classification.<sup>67</sup> Essentially, emphasis was gradually transferred from the role of the servant to the nature of establishment in which they worked. Therefore, the various types of traditional household workers that had been listed separately in the 1871 census tables, forty years later were simply grouped as 'other domestic indoor servants'.

Yet, the rate of change varied considerably between locations as demonstrated in a comparative analysis of the occupational composition of the industry in the three case-study towns. For the purposes of this study, the diverse occupations present in the census enumerators' books have been separated into five categories, including: business and institution staff; general household servants; indoor low status household servants; indoor high status or supervisory household

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<sup>66</sup> *Western Mail*, 1901, adverts sub-sections 'housekeeper, companions, etc'; 'nurses'; 'cooks'; 'generals'; 'kitchen maids'; 'sewing maids'; 'laundresses'; 'female servants'; 'man servants'; and 'man and wife'; *Western Mail*, 1921, headings 'hotel assistants'; 'general servants'; 'cooks and kitchen maids'; 'house and parlour maids'; 'mother's helps and nurses'; 'housekeepers and companions'; 'gardeners and chauffeurs'; 'farm hands'; and finally 'man and wife'.

<sup>67</sup> *Census of England and Wales: Preliminary Reports: occupation, industry, socio economic groups in Glamorgan 1871*: occupations listed under domestic service were 'generals, housekeeper, cook, housemaid, nurse, laundry maid, inn servant, nurse (not domestic), char woman, other'. *Census of England and Wales: Preliminary Reports- occupation, industry, socio economic groups in Glamorgan 1911*: 'domestics in hotels, lodging and eating houses'; 'domestics in hospitals, institutions and benevolence societies'; 'day girls and day servants'; 'laundry workers'; 'other domestic indoor servants'; 'domestic gardeners'; 'char women'; 'washers, ironers, manglers, etc'; and 'others'.

servants; and outdoor servants. These categories facilitate an understanding of the changing location of service as well as providing an insight into how it continued to function in private homes. This is partly based on the classification created by Hecht in identifying 'the principal line of cleavage' in the sector as the divide between 'upper' and 'lower' domestics:

The former included those servants whose work was executive and supervisory, and those who possessed special skills developed through long and sometimes expensive training. The latter category was composed of servants whose activities were controlled and directed, and whose work was of a relatively, unskilled, manual variety.<sup>68</sup>

By utilising this stark classification method in a study of Victorian and Edwardian servants, the changes in the character of household staff have become visible. However, this divide fails to provide a complete depiction of the changes in the industry as Hecht was primarily concerned with domestic service during the eighteenth century. The traditional hierarchy of service dated back to previous centuries when servant-keeping was more exclusive to higher income households that retained a full retinue of staff. As the practice increasingly spread to more modest homes and businesses during the nineteenth century, servant roles began to blur in all but the wealthiest of households. As a result the number of general servants or 'maids of all work' increased and the duties undertaken by specialist staff varied depending on the type of premises in which they worked, the requirements of their employers, and the number of staff engaged.<sup>69</sup> Despite the continuation of traditional specialist job titles, the actual domestic duties performed and wages offered varied considerably.

Industrialisation meant that many employers could no longer work from home, while the decline in agriculture gradually eroded the demand for servants on farms.<sup>70</sup> With the 'rapid rise of the Victorian city' and improved transport links many middle-class inhabitants relocated to the newly built suburbs such as Llanishen in Cardiff.<sup>71</sup> Suburban living not only consolidated the divide between home and work but also enabled homes to function more smoothly with only a daily cleaner. The

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<sup>68</sup> J. J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1956), p. 35.

<sup>69</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> Horn, *Pleasures and Pastimes*, p. 95.

<sup>71</sup> Horn, *Pleasures and Pastimes*, p. 34; C. Cook, *The Routledge Companion to the Nineteenth Century, 1815-1914* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), p. 106.

separation of home and work also heightened demand for new servant roles as household domestics could no longer clean work premises. Instead, posts such as office cleaners and caretakers were created. As a result of these changes the place of employment rather than the nature of the duties performed became a more common way for historical records such as census tables and *Western Mail* vacancy advertisements to classify servants. This marked a transition in the way domestic service was perceived. In the 1870s divisions between servants were centred on the type of house they worked in and their position in the traditional servant hierarchy. By the 1920s a greater awareness existed of the divide between household servants and those engaged in state institutions and commercial establishments. As a result conceptualising the industry in terms of the 'country-house hierarchy' provides a very narrow understanding of service instead more focus on the type of establishment in which the work was undertaken provides a wider and more accurate understanding of how the sector functioned in the late-nineteenth century. Therefore, the category of 'business and institution servants' has been added to Hecht's classification to reveal the increasing engagement of servants outside of private households. This reflected the distinction that had been made in 1911 census occupation tables. 'Outdoor workers' have formed the final category, as it was largely comprised of skilled individuals, who were often engaged by multiple employers, local government or businesses. Owing to the fact that they frequently 'lived out' (with their own families) it is difficult to trace the type of employer they worked for. Yet, despite the problematic nature of this classification system, it has proved the most practical and useful way of demonstrating the significant developments in domestic service during the period.

The most notable trend shown in Figure I.III is the increase in the proportion of servants working in business and public institutions. These included a wide range of occupations such as ostlers, bar staff, waitresses, 'maids of all work', office cleaners, cooks, chambermaids and boot boys. Their duties were similar to those carried out in private residences and often had the same job titles. Other posts were found only in businesses and institutions such as hospitals, hotels, pubs, offices and schools. Ostlers, for instance, cared for the horses of hotel guests while boot boys cleaned and polished the guests' shoes. Aberdare had the largest proportion of servants working outside private households of the three case-study towns. They



accounted for 14.4 percent of all sampled domestics working in Aberdare in 1871, and by 1911 the level had increased to 33.8 percent. Bridgend also experienced an expansion in this category of servants from 10.9 to 27.7 percent during the same period. Although no census figures exist for the war years, a study of the situation vacant advertisements has once again revealed that business and institution staff remained a notable aspects of the industry, on average accounting for 1 in 5 service positions between 1914 and 1918.

The movement of servants out of private households and into a wider range of businesses and institutions was a response to a number of social trends. In the late-nineteenth century leisure was no longer the preserve of the social elite. Increased prosperity, restricted working hours, urbanisation and the commercialisation of popular pastimes, all led to an expansion in the number of leisure facilities.<sup>72</sup> As a result a host of positions such as waitresses and porters were created in the newly established hotels and restaurants. Another important social factor was the establishment of municipal governance. In 1871 Local Government Boards were set up to supervise Poor Law provision and public health.<sup>73</sup> This was followed in 1875 with the introduction of the Public Health Act that gave Local Sanitary Authorities the power to regulate sanitary conditions and eventually led to an increase in the number of hospitals.<sup>74</sup> County Councils and County Borough Councils were created in 1888 and urban district, rural district and parish councils followed in 1894. Subsequent legislation such as the Public Libraries Act (1892), Education Act (1902) and the Housing Act (1909) also served to extend the power of local government and greatly improved urban areas.<sup>75</sup> The changes in the municipal environment and a rise in living standards generated a surge of civic pride that further stimulated the creation of public institutions such as museums, parks and libraries.<sup>76</sup> This is evident in the local trade directories where the number of listed public libraries increased from 12 in 1871 to 59 in 1920.

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<sup>72</sup> P. Horn, *Pleasures and Pastimes in Victorian Britain* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2011), pp. 20-22.

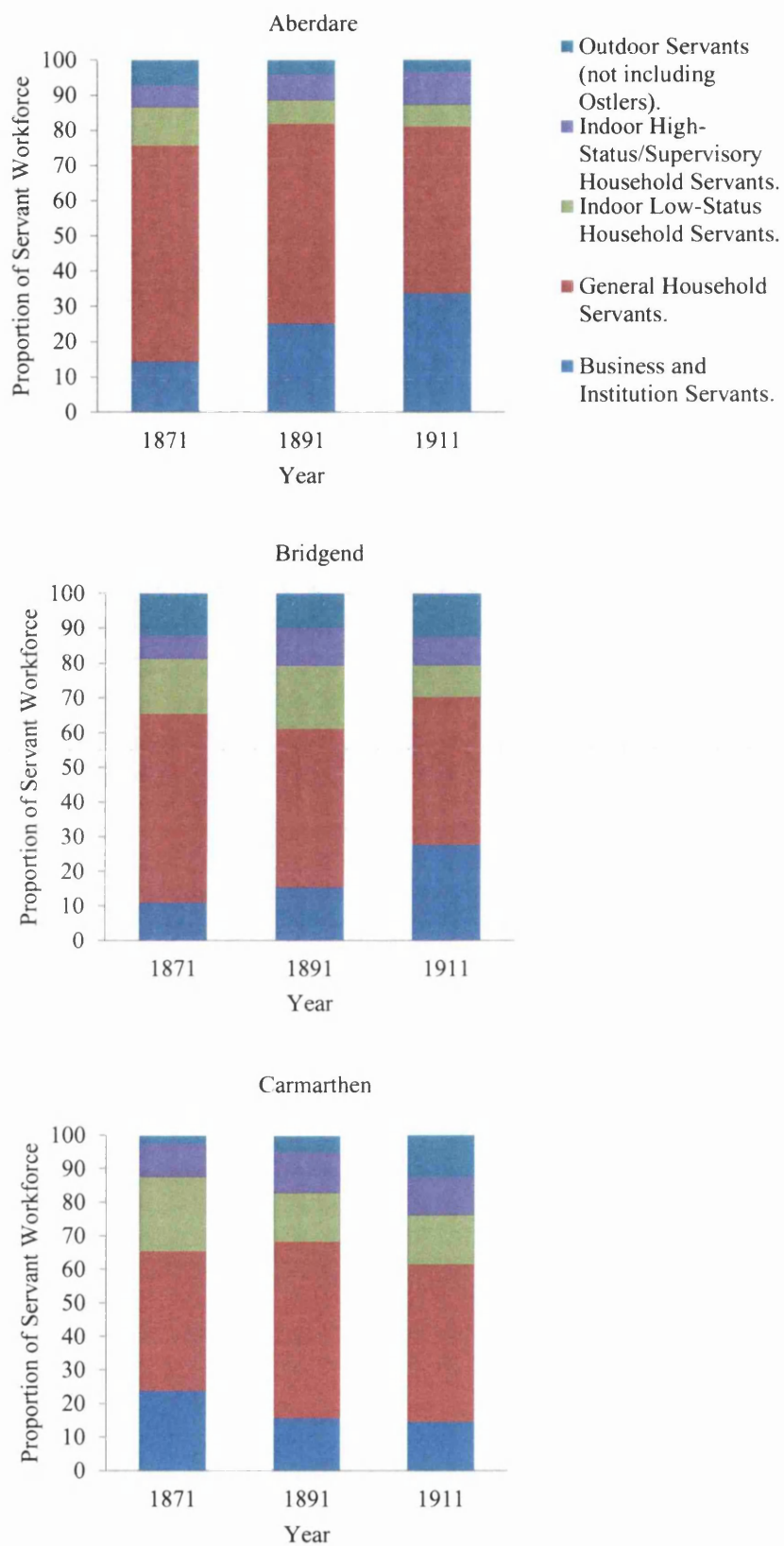
<sup>73</sup> Cook, *The Routledge Companion*, p. 116.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>76</sup> Horn, *Pleasures and Pastimes*, pp. 22 and 292; Cook, *The Routledge Companion to the Nineteenth Century*, p. 106.

Figure I.III. Percentage of servants in each town by occupational category.



Source: Census of England and Wales, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

Meanwhile, there were no museums in south Wales listed in 1871, yet four had been included by the end of the period.<sup>77</sup> Many of these public establishments heavily relied on domestic labour and so an increase in their numbers contributed to the demand for servants.

Carmarthen, however, saw a decline in the proportion of 'business and institution' staff. This reflected the more traditional nature of the industry in the town that had resulted from its isolated, rural location and older population demographic. Carmarthen also had the lowest proportion of 'general household servants', with only 41.6 percent being engaged in this category at the start of the study period. General servants or 'maids of all work', as they were also known, were usually young girls based in lower income households and were frequently the only servant engaged by the family.<sup>78</sup> Although no distinctively Welsh household management manuals have been discovered, the omnipresent Mrs Beeton described how 'the mistress's commands are the measure of the maid-of-all-work's duties... for she has to do in her own person all the work which in larger establishments is performed by cook, kitchen-maid, and housemaid, and occasionally the part of a footman's duty, which consists of carrying messages'.<sup>79</sup> Carmarthen's results differed greatly to the national average of two-thirds of Britain's 1.2 million servants being listed as general servants.<sup>80</sup> By 1911 the proportion had increased but was still relatively low, accounting for only 46.9 percent. Once again the results confirm the traditional nature of the industry in the town. The heightened demand for non-specialist staff was, in part, a response to the emergence of lower income servant-employing households during the nineteenth century.<sup>81</sup>

In contrast, Bridgend and Aberdare had significantly higher proportions of servants employed as 'generals' or 'maids of all work' as they were also known. In 1871, 54.5 percent of servants in Bridgend and 61.3 percent in Aberdare were

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<sup>77</sup> *The Post Office Directory* (1871); *Kelly's Directory*, (1920).

<sup>78</sup> M. Higgs, *Tracing Your Servant Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2012), p. 134.

<sup>79</sup> I. Beeton, *Mrs Beeton's Household Management* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2006), pp. 960-96. Isabella Beeton b. 1836 was the eldest of 21 children, a journalist and wife. Her book of household management was first published in 1861 but remained popular throughout the Victorian era despite her death at the age of just 28 years. It covers a range of issues such as cookery, beauty, cleaning, servants, etiquette and health.

<sup>80</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 18.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, p. 56.

general domestics. This reflected the findings of Pamela Horn that mining districts had a dearth of specialist domestics as they lacked a servant-keeping tradition.<sup>82</sup> This effectively meant that there was less demand for higher-status workers and little incentive or opportunity for the girls to train for higher-ranking roles. This was compounded by the early marriage age on the coalfield and the short duration of their time in employment prohibiting progress into more skilled posts.<sup>83</sup> However, as displayed in Figure I.III, in Aberdare and Bridgend, the proportion of 'general' servants had begun to decline by 1911. This was partially the result of the improved recording accuracy of female occupations by census enumerators who less frequently used 'general' as a shorthand for all servants.<sup>84</sup> The development of alternative sources of employment for young women may also have had a potent impact on the number of non-specialist maids in south Wales. This was particularly evident during the First World War, where the number of general servants sought via the *Western Mail* almost halved between 1914 and 1918.<sup>85</sup> The low pay, lack of prestige and harsh working conditions particularly associated with the position of 'maid of all work' made it one of the least desirable service occupations to enter and the occupation most were likely to leave as alternative sources of female employment developed. As Mrs Beeton explained to her readers, the 'general servant' is 'the only one of her class deserving commiseration: her life is a solitary one, and in, some places, her work is never done...to discharge these various duties properly is a difficult task, and sometimes a thankless office'.<sup>86</sup> When engaged in establishments such as farms their duties could be even more diverse. A Welsh servant working on a farm in Oswestry described the extensive range of her chores:

I learnt to milk and make cheese and butter. I was very happy there looking after the calves, ducks, hens and chickens, and gathering the eggs. My wage was 2/6 per month. I stayed there until I was twelve years old. Then I went to another farm in Marple (near Stockport), where I was very comfortable and happy. My wages there was 3/- per month. I had five cows to milk morning and night, clean the shippens out, take the cows to the field and churn the butter in

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<sup>82</sup> P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth-Century* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001), p. 45.

<sup>83</sup> D. Jones, 'Counting the Cost of Coal: Women's Lives in the Rhondda, 1881-1911' in A.V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1839* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p.113.

<sup>84</sup> Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women*, pp. 53-4.

<sup>85</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 1914, 1916, 1918.

<sup>86</sup> Beeton, *Household Management*, pp. 960 and 964.

the afternoon, and four little children to look after while my mistress was busy in the shop.<sup>87</sup>

Her account reveals that farm-based domestics had a much wider range of duties than their urban counterparts.

The decline in the proportion of general servants in south Wales contrasted greatly with the findings of Theresa McBride's comparative study of France and England which saw an increase in the percentage of 'maids of all work' as specialisation declined.<sup>88</sup> Different understandings of the parameters of the domestic service industry are pivotal in explaining the divergent trends. General servants in France and England increased as a proportion of all domestics employed in private households. This was particularly influenced by the expansion of the middle classes as they required less specialised staff than those previously retained by the aristocracy. Cultural changes such as the development of public transport, the increasing popularity of restaurants and new styles of houses also reduced the need for specialist workers.<sup>89</sup> However, when commercial and institutional domestics are taken into consideration, 'maids of all work' constituted a declining percentage of the overall workforce. The decline in the percentage of servants engaged as 'general' workers suggests that a growing number were entering positions outside of the private household.

The movement of servant positions from households to businesses was not the only development that occurred in south Wales' domestic service industry during the period. There was also a significant change in the type of occupations employed in private households. Between 1871 and 1911 the proportion of 'indoor low-status household servants' declined as the number of 'indoor high-status and supervisory household servants' increased in all three towns. The low-status positions identified in the census case-study included: charwoman; laundress; scullery maid; kitchen maid; housemaid; and parlour maid. However, it was the fall in the number of traditional specialist live-in maids that led to the decline. The most frequently recorded were charwomen and laundresses. The latter were responsible for the onerous task of washing clothes and household linen while charwomen undertook

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<sup>87</sup> Mrs Wrigley, 'A Plate-Layer's Wife', in Llewelyn-Davies (eds.), *The Classic Life as We Have Known It*, p. 65.

<sup>88</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

other heavy and dirty chores such as cleaning fire grates.<sup>90</sup> The remainder of the positions were live-in maids, and if based in a large household with multiple domestic staff, had specialist roles. The kitchen maid assisted the cook, undertaking the preparation of food and the cooking of more straightforward dishes. She also catered for the other servants and was essentially an apprentice-cook.<sup>91</sup> A scullery maid's duties, on the other hand, involved the cleaning of the kitchen, the washing up and often the blackening of the kitchen range.<sup>92</sup> Meanwhile, owing to the higher cost of keeping male servants, middle-class families often engaged a parlour-maid instead of a footman. Her duties included 'laying the table, waiting at meals, answering the door and announcing visitors'.<sup>93</sup> In contrast, the role of a housemaid was centred on the cleaning of rooms, the lighting of fires and more general household tasks such as turning down beds and replacing candles.<sup>94</sup> However, in many instances these two jobs were merged, as frequently occurred in the *Western Mail's* situation vacant columns. Of the advertisements sampled, 134 related to the post of housemaid, 14 sought a parlour maid, while 81 requested the dual role of house-parlour maid. These were thought to have had 'double the work for less money' often being located in households that could not afford the two separate servants to fill the roles.<sup>95</sup>

Where such specialist servants continued to be employed, their duties were increasingly indistinct. Although the engagement of a housemaid would seem to denote the presence of other domestic staff, it was often the case that they were the only servant in the home. In these cases the role of the housemaid was often akin to that of the 'maid of all work'. For instance in 1911 tailor's daughter, 16 year old Gladys Lewis, was engaged as a housemaid in the single servant household of a 77 year old pensioner of private means in Spilman Street, Carmarthen. In other households housemaids were frequently employed in combination with a cook. During the same year in Picton terrace, Carmarthen, farmer's daughter 18 year old Jane Mathias was engaged in the home of a 42 year old tea merchant, along with 22 year old cook, Annie Jones. While Annie would have probably undertaken most of the kitchen-based duties, it is possible that the remainder of the household chores

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<sup>90</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 173.

<sup>91</sup> Higgs, *Tracing Your Servant Ancestors*, p. 128.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, p. 129.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p.130.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 132-133.

<sup>95</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, p. 25.

would have been performed by Jane. Therefore, despite the title of 'housemaid' her duties were largely those of a general servant.

Carmarthen had the highest number of housemaids suggesting a retention of older servant titles that date back to the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century when a larger proportion of household domestics were specialised and more exclusive to higher income families. Beyond the job title, it is possible that by the end of the nineteenth century there was little variation in the duties of many housemaids in Carmarthen and 'maids of all work' in Aberdare. In this respect examining the type of servants employed is as much an exercise in analysing the changing occupational labels as the occupations themselves. The decline in specialisation of household staff is reflected in the changing classification of servants from being based on rank to place of work. The fall in the proportion of lower status servants in south Wales between 1871 and 1911 reflects the growth in other female industries such as retail and clerical work.<sup>96</sup> Those working in lower status service posts would have been the most likely to leave the industry as they were generally younger and endured harsher conditions than many of their higher status and more skilled counterparts.

Consequently, the number of general and 'lower-status household servants' declined and the proportion of 'higher-status and supervisory servants' increased. These included: skilled positions such as cooks; supervisory roles for instance housekeepers and butlers; and personal assistance staff for example valets, lady's maids, nurses and companion. Butlers were the highest status positions and least commonly found servant in the three case-study towns. The duties of a butler included the supervision of other staff, waiting at table and caring for the best crockery and silver. The 'real duties of the butler' were said to have been centred on the wine cellar, where 'he should be competent to advise his master as to the price and quality of the wine to be laid in... Brewing, racking, and bottling malt liquors, belong to his office as well as their distribution. These and other drinkables are brought from the cellar every day by his own hand.'<sup>97</sup> Valets were another rare but highly skilled servant, in fact they only feature once in the sampled census enumerators' books, in Carmarthen during 1871. The duties of a valet included the

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<sup>96</sup> Turner, *What the Butler Saw*, p. 233.

<sup>97</sup> Beeton, *Household Management*, p. 919.

dressings of their master and accompanying him on long journeys.<sup>98</sup> Other 'attendants on the person', as Mrs Beeton has labelled them, include nurses (non-medical), companions and lady's maids. While nurses cared for children, companions were frequently found in the houses of the sick and the elderly, and lady's maids were essentially the female equivalent of a valet. These were also skilled positions, for instance lady's maids were expected to be 'a tolerably expert milliner and dressmaker, a good hairdresser, and possess some chemical knowledge of the cosmetics with which the toilet-table is supplied, in order to use them with safety and effect'.<sup>99</sup> Such high status roles were more common in Carmarthen as they were frequently engaged by older employers. In keeping with Carmarthen's character as an older administrative centre, less urbanised, with fewer migrants and an elderly demographic, the nature of the industry was somewhat more traditional with the retention of older job titles.

The most common domestics among the 'high-status and supervisory servants' were housekeepers and cooks. These positions were top of the female servant hierarchy and could be comprised of highly skilled older women. They also had the most notable presence in Carmarthen. Cooks were particularly sought after outstripping the number of housekeepers in all three towns. Yet, there were significant variations in their working conditions. Some had a highly specialist role delegating plain cooking and cleaning chores to kitchen and scullery maids. Others were engaged in more modest households, had no assistance in the kitchen at all, and were even expected to perform general cleaning tasks in the rest of the house as well. This was acknowledged in the charging structure of recruitment firms such as Mrs Hunt's Agency for Servants. The fee charged by the agency depended on the type of servant sourced. For cooks that were provided with assistance a fee of 15 shillings was charged outside of London. For cooks without the assistance of other kitchen staff the fee was 20 shillings possibly reflecting the difficulty in recruiting skilled cooks to accept positions where they would be expected to undertake additional food preparation and cleaning duties.<sup>100</sup> Likewise, the working conditions and duties of housekeepers could also be variable. While some had purely supervisory roles, others

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid, p. 936.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, p.939.

<sup>100</sup> GA: D/D LIF300, Baglan House Records, A pamphlet advertising Mrs Hunt's Agency based in London.



were the sole servant engaged in the house. They undertook all the duties of the 'maid of all work'. Yet, instead of young girls, they were usually older, married or widowed women. Such women became commonly known as 'working-housekeepers' and were a result of the supply shortage of young girls in the sector. This was clearly demonstrated in the situations vacant advertisements, with one example reading, 'wanted immediately middle-aged woman as working-housekeeper to widower in poor health; no servant kept; good references required- Peel, Laugharne'.<sup>101</sup> Another stated 'wanted housekeeper, to make herself generally useful, away at business all day; no children, aged 30 to 38 years preferred, reference required'.<sup>102</sup> The advertisements demonstrate that significant variation in occupational duties existed depending on the needs of the individual households and businesses. During the First World War the number of advertisements for high-status and supervisory staff increased, with most employers seeking cooks and working housekeepers. In 1914 such domestics accounted for 22.7 percent of the service workforce, by 1916 this had risen to 25.7 and then to 31.7 percent by 1918. This reflects the decline in the availability of the younger 'maids of all work'.

As the nineteenth century progressed, male indoor servants such as butlers, valets and footmen became the preserve of the wealthy. Consequently, outdoor positions accounted for an increasing proportion of the servant workforce, predominantly amongst males. These were largely comprised of gardeners, grooms and coachmen along with chauffeurs, and stable-boys. While a gardener was responsible for the garden and grounds, and a chauffeur was responsible for the driving, maintenance and repair of cars, the distinction between coachmen, groom and stable-boy is not so clear-cut. The coachman was the most senior position, as:

besides skill in driving [the carriage], he should possess a good general knowledge of horses; he has usually to purchase provender, to see that the horses are regularly fed and properly groomed, watch over their condition, apply simple remedies to trifling ailments in the animals under his charge, and report where he observed symptoms of more serious ones which he does not understand. He has either to clean the carriage himself or see that the stable-boy does it properly.<sup>103</sup>

Cleaning the carriage was in addition to the other duties of a stable boy which included cleaning the stables and removing 'stable-dung'. In contrast, the groom

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<sup>101</sup> 'Situations Vacant', *Western Mail*, 15 July 1911.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> Beeton, *Household Management*, pp. 929-930.

exercised the horses and out of the three roles they were most common, being sought after in modest household that did not keep a carriage. They were more desirable as they had more knowledge than a stable-boy and performed a wider range of duties than the coachman. It was said that 'the groom's first duties are to keep his horses in condition; but he is also sometimes expected to perform the duties of a valet, to ride out with his master, on occasions, to wait at table, and otherwise assist in the house'.<sup>104</sup> The number of 'outdoor servants' was particularly high in Bridgend. This was the result of the larger number of male migrants from agricultural counties seeking work in the area. Owing to its position outside the coalfield, there was no dominant source of employment to absorb their labour. The increase in the number of outdoor workers in Carmarthen was possibly the result of a shortage of agricultural positions inducing more young boys from its hinterlands to seek service roles in the town. In contrast, 'outdoor servants' were of less significance in Aberdare and declined as the period progressed and the coal industry expanded.

The variable nature of servant duties is reflected in the industry's pay scale. Owing to the lack of regulation, the provision of board and lodge and multiple positions it has proved incredibly difficult to gauge the average wages of servants during the nineteenth century.<sup>105</sup> Only a small number of servant wage books have been discovered and they often fail to include the positions of servants or even their names. Others were incomplete having been kept over a short period of time. Therefore, wages offered by employers in the 'situations vacant' advertisements have proved the best way of assessing servant salaries in south Wales as they reflect the actual wages offered and are one of the most continuous sources of evidence. They reveal that the average servant salary increased from £14.14 to £16.40 between 1871 and 1881, before reaching a plateau over the next twenty years. In 1911 the average income increased dramatically once again, to £21.49, before more than doubling by 1921 to £44.47.<sup>106</sup> The stagnation of servant wages in the late nineteenth century reflected the slowdown in the growth of middle-class incomes.<sup>107</sup> Meanwhile, the dramatic improvement in servant wages in the twentieth century is thought to have been in response to high demand and fewer servants willing to live-in in the

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> D. M. Barton, 'The Course of Women's Wages' in *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 82 (1919) p. 514.

<sup>106</sup> 'Situations Vacant', *Western Mail*, 1871-1921.

<sup>107</sup> Higgs, *Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England*, p. 204.

aftermath of the First World War.<sup>108</sup> The south Wales results closely resemble the findings of McBride in outlining how servants' wages in France increased through the nineteenth century before levelling off after 1870.<sup>109</sup> This has been attributed to the older age demographic of workers in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and a decline in the supply of young recruits, as servants over 35 years received lower salaries.<sup>110</sup> In contrast the findings of Pamela Horn, based on C.E. Collet's *Report on the Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants* (1899) indicate that the wages of female servants improved with age.<sup>111</sup> In south Wales annual earnings increased until the domestics were in their mid-thirties and fell thereafter, as demonstrated in Table I.I. The decline may have been the result of the daily nature of service amongst older women who occupied positions such as daily cleaner and char woman.<sup>112</sup>

Table I.I. A comparison of the average servant salary in south Wales and the national average for England and Wales.

Servant Age*	South Wales Wages**	National Average***
16	£8.00	£9
18	£13.00	£12.20
20	£15.00	£14.40
21-24	£18.33	£16.50
25-29	£17.60	£19.50
30-34	£38.00	£21.50
40>	£22.00	£24.70

\*As Categorised by C.E. Collet in her *Report on the Money Wages of Indoor Domestic Servants*.

\*\*Wages as presented in the situations vacant columns per annum.

\*\*\*Average income of servants recorded by C.E. Collet.

Source: *Western Mail* Sample Adverts, 1871-1921; Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 146.

The results also reveal that the wages in south Wales closely resembled the servant income for England and Wales as a whole. Servants aged 18-24 and 30-34 years earned a slightly higher annual salary than the national average. The later age group has proved the most significant anomaly with servants in Wales earning almost twice as much as those in the rest of the country, suggesting a high local

<sup>108</sup> Barton, 'The Course of Women's Wages', p. 514.

<sup>109</sup> McBride, *Domestic Revolution*, p. 60.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>111</sup> Horn, *Rise and Fall*, p. 146; 'Recent Parliamentary Papers', *The Economic Journal* 9 (1899); Collet surveyed 2,067 households employing 5,453 women and 326 men.

<sup>112</sup> McBride, *Domestic Revolution*, p. 67.

demand for domestics of that age category. It may also reflect the tendency of career servants in their thirties to progress into higher skilled and, therefore, better paid roles. For instance, in 1911 lady's maids earned £29 a year in south Wales whilst kitchen maids received only £18. The type of household or establishment in which the servant was engaged also had a significant impact on the salary received. Cooks for example, commanded higher wages than 'cook-generals' owing to their specialist roles and engagement in affluent households and businesses. While the latter only received £14 in 1891, the former commanded an average of £18.57. Similarly, in 1911 'house-parlourmaids' generally earned £18.33, whereas their more specialist colleagues engaged as parlourmaids received £24.33 a year (see appendix VI for full table of wages). This reflected the wider variations in servant income, as Dorothea Barton explained in 1919 'the extraordinary variety in the wages earned by women for the same work has long been the astonishment of observers and the despairs of reformers'.<sup>113</sup>

This has made comparing the earnings of servants with those engaged in other sectors difficult, especially when board and lodgings are taken into consideration. It has been argued that 'live-in' domestics were generally better off than women employed in other sectors, as they had no living expenses to cover.<sup>114</sup> In addition, Barton argued that the monetary value of the food provided by employers increased, especially after the First World War, as did the quality of the food supplied. Likewise, she has claimed that with 'more stringent building regulations and the short supply of servants', staff accommodation also improved in all but the most densely populated urban areas.<sup>115</sup> In regards to monetary wages, the higher ranks of the industry received a similar pay level to those in the nursing profession. In 1890 nurses earned approximately £20 a year while sisters received around £10 more.<sup>116</sup> However, lower status domestics were on a similar pay scale to women engaged in the Cardiff retail sector. Shop girls under twenty years of age received £10 a year which doubled by the time they were in their early twenties. Those in their mid-late twenties or older commanded approximately £25 to £30 a year depending

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<sup>113</sup> Barton, 'The Course of Women's Wages', p. 535.

<sup>114</sup> Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women*, p. 52.

<sup>115</sup> Barton, 'The Course of Women's Wages', p. 514.

<sup>116</sup> Bartley, *The Changing Role of Women*, p. 74.

on their experience and position.<sup>117</sup> Male servants normally held skilled or supervisory positions and so received higher wages than their female colleagues. Even where similar duties were undertaken male servants received larger remunerations. For instance, in 1921 porters earned approximately £65 while ‘portresses’ were offered £20 less.<sup>118</sup> In Britain male domestics overall earned an average of £55 a year in 1881, which increased to £63.65 by 1901.<sup>119</sup> This was significantly higher than agricultural labourers who saw their income increase from £41.52 to £46.12 during the same period. Other industries that had similar average earnings included railway workers and those employed as general non-agricultural labourers. If board and lodge is taken into consideration, resident male servants enjoyed a higher annual income than all these sectors. Despite the dominance of the coal industry in south Wales the number of male servants increased. However, this was not the result of higher wages in the service sector as by 1901 miners earned £25.72 more than servants suggesting that men could find higher wages in heavy industry. Yet, twenty years earlier the gap between the two industries was narrower with miners receiving on average only £4.58 more a year. Therefore, economic factors do not explain why an increasing number of men in south Wales chose to enter service despite the plethora of better paid positions in the local mines.

The evidence for the south Wales towns under scrutiny here has revealed domestic service to have been a highly significant industry in Wales. It accounted for a substantial amount of occupied females and a noteworthy number of male workers. Rather than viewing the years between 1871 and 1921 as a period of contraction for the sector, the census figures have shown that its rate of expansion merely fell below that of other industries. Up to 1911 the actual number of servants continued to rise while the proportion of the workforce it constituted fell. Yet even this decline can be contested owing to changes in the categorisation of servants by census enumerators and the splintering of occupations out from under the umbrella of domestic service. A case-study of Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen has facilitated a deeper understanding of the factors that influenced the scale of the sector through revealing the extent of local variations. Many interesting trends have emerged such as the

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<sup>117</sup> C. Howells, *Sales Assistants, Shops and the Development of Cardiff's Retail Sector, 1850-1920*, (Swansea University: MA Thesis, 2010), p. 61.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Situations Vacant’, *Western Mail*, 1871-1921.

<sup>119</sup> J. Williamson, ‘Earnings Inequality in Nineteenth-Century Britain’ in *The Journal of Economic History* 40 (1980), p. 474.

failure of south Wales to conform to several wider British trends. Wales had a higher proportion of women engaged in service and failed to experience a significant contraction of the industry until the First World War. This was partly owing to the limited alternative employment opportunities for women in South Wales and the continuation of traditional gender doctrines. The eventual decline in the proportion of servants in the overall workforce was largely the result of increased competition for female labour from newly emerging industries. In south Wales, employer demand remained high throughout the period as census data, situation vacant newspaper advertisements and personal testimony have demonstrated. This had a significant impact on the character of sector between 1871 and 1921, with a movement of workers out of private households and into business and state institutions. As a consequence, domestic service was increasingly categorised by place of work and less by the traditional country house hierarchy.

## II

### **Changing Lifecycle Employment Patterns and its Impact on the Domestic Service Workforce.**

This chapter aims to uncover how the heightened demand for servants and limited supply of young girls impacted on the demographic character of domestic servants between 1871 and 1921. This is essential to our understanding of domestic service as an industry in south Wales as it confirms the presence of an identifiable and distinctive workforce. It also develops our understanding of its nature and provides an insight into how the sector evolved in response to the area's changing social and economic conditions. The engagement of day workers, the gradual shift to less specialist roles and the recruitment of domestics in commercial and business premises made the industry accessible to a more diverse range of workers. As the period progressed and fears over a potential servant shortage developed, employers became increasingly flexible as to the nature of domestic help they engaged. By the start of the twentieth century, the young, single 'maid of all work', who resided with her employer and undertook most household duties were thought to have become incredibly hard to find and even harder to retain. This resulted in the increasing willingness of employers to hire servants from a broader demographic. By 1911 the domestic service workforce in south Wales was not only older but also comprised a larger number of married women, widows and parents. The socio-economic nature of individual towns shaped the demographic of the workforce and subsequently the character of their local industry. An examination of the three case-study areas provides an insight into the significant impact location had on the nature of the workforce and the variations that existed in south Wales.

This chapter will show that Welsh servants fell into one of three groups each defined by factors such as the nature of their employment, personal circumstance, duration of service and motivation for entering the industry. These three life stage groupings may be labelled 'long-term career' servants, 'stop-gap' workers and 'indigent seniors'. Long-term career servants were generally skilled and often remained in a post with one family for the duration of their working lives. They also provided services to institutions or a number of households and businesses. Stop-gap workers utilised the sector as a bridge either into another industry or more commonly into marriage. These were normally young, unskilled girls working, predominantly as

‘maids of all work’ in fairly modest households. Lastly, ‘indigent seniors’ were frequently compelled to enter or re-enter the sector during times of financial hardship. The positions held were more commonly casual, part-time, low skilled and did not require them to live-in with their employers. While some women could move in and out of the industry when necessary, for others it was a more permanent lifeline that provided a very basic financial safety net. Throughout the period the ageing career servants combined with the increasing proportion of ‘indigent seniors’ had a significant impact on the character of the sector. Meanwhile, the number of school-leavers temporarily entering the service failed to keep pace with the growth of the wider female workforce. It is acknowledged that the use of such broad categories risks over generalisation of a complex range of workers, but through their use it is possible to assess the changing role of the sector in south Wales society and the transitional character of its workforce. This chapter firstly provides an analysis of servant age between 1871 and 1911, demonstrating the impact of occupation, location and average marriage age. The influence of the personal circumstances of householders on the type of servants engaged is also considered with an exploration of the age, marital status and family size of servant-employers. Finally, the existence of an unofficial marriage bar is examined, demonstrating how married workers and even parents were increasingly able to source employment in the domestic service industry.

Previous studies of servant demography have largely focused on lifecycle stage. Pamela Horn and Ebery and Preston have all presented a statistical overview of the age and marriage composition of Britain’s domestic service workforce. Theresa McBride’s comparative study of England and France has provided an analysis of the impact of the industry on the marital prospects of those employed within it. Meanwhile, Stephen Gross’ American study and Raffaella Sarti’s broad European analysis have both attempted to explain the disparities in the demographic of the workforce through an examination of the motives of those who sought to enter the sector. Three core arguments have emerged from these studies: that there was an increase in the average age of servants during the nineteenth century; that marriage and parenthood was uncommon amongst domestic staff; and that service was largely a temporary post for most women between school and matrimony. It has been frequently stated that approximately a third of girls in England and Wales between



15 and 20 years of age were engaged in domestic service.<sup>1</sup> Yet, Gross has identified an increase in the average age of American domestics. Between 1900 and 1910 their age increased from 27.4 to 29.6.<sup>2</sup> A similar pattern has emerged in Britain with a 34 percent decline in the number of staff under 15 years between 1881 and 1901.<sup>3</sup> A range of factors have been proposed to explain the trend such as a fall in the supply of young workers and an increase in the number of middle-class households seeking chams and daily cleaners owing to economic stagnation in the late nineteenth century. Studies by Ebery and Preston and Tilly and Scott have highlighted the Education Acts (introduced from 1870 onwards) as key features in the decline in the supply of young domestics, as these effectively prohibited children under 14 from being engaged on a full-time basis in the sector.<sup>4</sup> The introduction of another piece of legislation has had a more debatable impact on worker lifecycle. The 1908 Old Age Pensions Bill has been attributed with easing the pressure on employers to provide for their retired servants. In doing so the bill removed one major disincentive to hiring older workers and Horn has argued that, they consequently had more opportunities to work in later life.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, the availability of state assistance also had the potential to reduce the number of elderly workers. By 1911, only 17,131 of the 1.3 million female domestics and 742 of the 54,000 male servants in Britain were over 65.<sup>6</sup> Significant state measures, however, were most pronounced during the twentieth century, beyond the time frame of this study.

The research in this chapter is heavily dependent on a quantitative analysis of the census enumerators' records and situations vacant columns of the *Western Mail* newspaper. The results reveal the age, marital status and number of children for each servant included in the census case-study. The 'situation vacant' adverts enabled employers to specify the type of person they required for particular vacancies and so provide a wealth of information on the nature of the servants sought by prospective employers. In turn those seeking a new post were able to detail their own personal

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<sup>1</sup> P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975) p. 33.

<sup>2</sup> S. Gross, 'Domestic Labour as a Life Course Event: The Effects of Ethnicity in Turn of the Century America' in *Social Science History* 15 (1991) p. 411.

<sup>3</sup> S. Dex, *Women's Occupational Mobility: A Lifetime Perspective* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1987), p. 153.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid; M. Ebery, and B. Preston, *Geographical Papers: Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 1871-1914* (Reading: University of Reading, 1976), p. 34.

<sup>5</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 165.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

attributes and circumstances, in order to elicit a response from a potential employer. As a result the advertisements provide a wealth of information about both servants and their employers. When these are combined with the data gathered from the census enumerator books, a detailed insight into the demographic nature of the workforce is acquired. However, there remains the need to be mindful of inaccuracies. Oral testimony has revealed that young women often inflated their age in order to gain employment in institutions such as hospitals.<sup>7</sup> Such discrepancies may have been recorded in the census enumerator books. Likewise, in positions where marriage and parenthood was discouraged, the concealment of spouses and children may have occurred. The census results can, however, along with the situations vacant advertisements, be utilised to gain a greater understanding of the appeal of the sector to such a wide demographic of workers and the way the sector functioned in society.

As chapter one revealed, between 1891 and 1921 the character of the industry changed considerably as the proportion of daily servant occupations in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen expanded. The perception existed in Wales that young servants were becoming increasingly difficult to recruit. One newspaper article on the issue, from March 1900, suggested that good residential maids were becoming as hard to source as ‘blue roses’.<sup>8</sup> The writer asked ‘what is to be done? For with the spread of education there is a constant increase in the number of women who don’t like doing dirty work and want it done for them’.<sup>9</sup> The solution proposed was increased employment of older, daily maids and charwomen:

A practical suggestion for alleviating the present tension is offered us that of visiting assistants, to give them a sonorous title. For instance, many a young wife of the middle class will say that she does not mind doing most of the work of her small household; finding that it keeps her in good health and spirits, but she dislikes the awkwardness of having no attendant. It is not pleasant certainly for her to have to answer the door herself when she is, perhaps, in the middle of ‘washing up’ and to have to plunge into polite conversation without a moment to ‘tidy up’; and it is not conducive to a restful meal to have to keep jumping up and down to change the dishes, especially if there is a guest at the table, who is not quite sure whether to offer to help or not. Now, here comes in our visiting or daily parlourmaid... The charwoman we have always with us; so, if the house

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<sup>7</sup> SWML: AUD/478 Women’s Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley, Audio Recordings, Mrs Lewis. Mrs Lewis at 15 and a half told Swansea Hospital that she was 17, as that was the minimum age for entry.

<sup>8</sup> ‘The Ways of Women’, *Western Mail*, 10 March 1900.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

gets to look less fresh than it should under this half-and-half system, we can always fall back upon her for cleaning purposes. For the very girls who turn up their noses at domestic service are often thankful, poor souls after a few years of matrimony, to accept such very drudgery of household work as generally falls to the lot of the charwomen.<sup>10</sup>

This article examines the increasing importance of daily servants, as live-in staff became more difficult to source. For the article's author, servant supply problems were the root cause of changes in the industry, rather than any decline in the demand for live-in domestics. This contrasts to arguments proposed by historians such as Louise Tilly and Joan Scott who identified other factors, such as the increasing economic pressures on middle-class households and labour-saving technological developments, which curbed employer demand for full-time domestic help.<sup>11</sup> Despite debates over the cause of the demographic change in the service workforce, it is clear that contemporaries were highly aware of the evolution of the sector and viewed older workers as a solution to their labour shortage.

However, this gradual change made it an ever more accessible form of employment to a broader spectrum of the population. This period saw the initiation of the sector's transition from being dominated by the traditional live-in 'maids of all work', to one comprising the more modern phenomenon of the older day worker. This resulted in 'indigent seniors' comprising an ever greater section of the industry. The core reason for the change has been attributed to the shortage of young 'stop-gap' girls in the sector from around 1900 onwards.<sup>12</sup> This was the result of several social developments. It has been particularly connected to the late nineteenth-century education acts that introduced compulsory education then slowly raised the school leaving age from 11 years in 1893 to 14 in 1918.<sup>13</sup> Education improvements not only reduced the number of servants under fourteen, it also led to fewer women viewing service as a potential career after their schooling was complete. For some women education broadened their opportunities and heightened their ambitions beyond domestic 'drudgery'.<sup>14</sup> It also related to the expansion of alternative employment opportunities for some young girls in the clerical, manufacturing or retail

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> L. A. Tilly, and J. W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (London: Routledge, 1987), pp. 153-154.

<sup>12</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> P. Summerfield, and G. Braybon, '*Out of the Cage*': *Women's Experiences in Two World Wars*. (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1987), p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Dex, *Women's Occupational Mobility*, p. 153.

industries.<sup>15</sup> Domestic service was also a vital stepping stone into other industries.<sup>16</sup> Historians of the nursing profession, for example, have noted that it continued to recruit many of its members from amongst the 'servant class' throughout the nineteenth-century.<sup>17</sup> Higher status servants were often engaged as 'sisters', whose duties have been described as those of a 'domestic supervisor'.<sup>18</sup> This was because servants often possessed the necessary skills and experience to care for patients having cared for babies, invalids and the elderly.

At a British level, the number of female servants aged between fifteen and twenty years fell by seven percent (between 1881 and 1901) despite an increase in the proportion of the population in this age bracket.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, the number of maids aged between ten and fifteen years declined from 100,000 to 39,413 between 1891 and 1911.<sup>20</sup> Despite the decline in the proportion of young servants, particularly those under 15 years, it remained an important source of employment for young women, with one third of British girls between 15 and 20 years of age being employed in the sector during the period.<sup>21</sup> One-third of all indoor male servants in mid-Victorian England were also under 20 years of age, most working as the male equivalent of the 'maids of all work'.<sup>22</sup> Domestic service in Britain remained predominantly a young person's industry up to 1921.<sup>23</sup> This is demonstrated in the census sample results for Aberdare, Carmarthen and Bridgend displayed in Figure II.I. The overwhelming majority of the workers in the three study towns were in the 20-29 year old category followed closely by the nineteen and under group. This suggests that the industry's function as a bridging occupation was maintained throughout the period in south Wales, despite the increasing proportion of older

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<sup>15</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 34; Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 24; P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth-Century* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001) p. 10; F.V. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: A True Portrait of Upstairs, Downstairs Life* (London: Century in Association with the National Trust, 1973) p. 28; Tilly, and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, p. 17.

<sup>16</sup> E. N. Glenn, 'The Dialects of Wage Work: Japanese-American Women and Domestic Service, 1906-1940' in *Feminist Studies* 6 (1980), p.428.

<sup>17</sup> B. Abel-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession* (London: Heinemann Educational books Ltd, 1970), pp. 4-5.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 28.

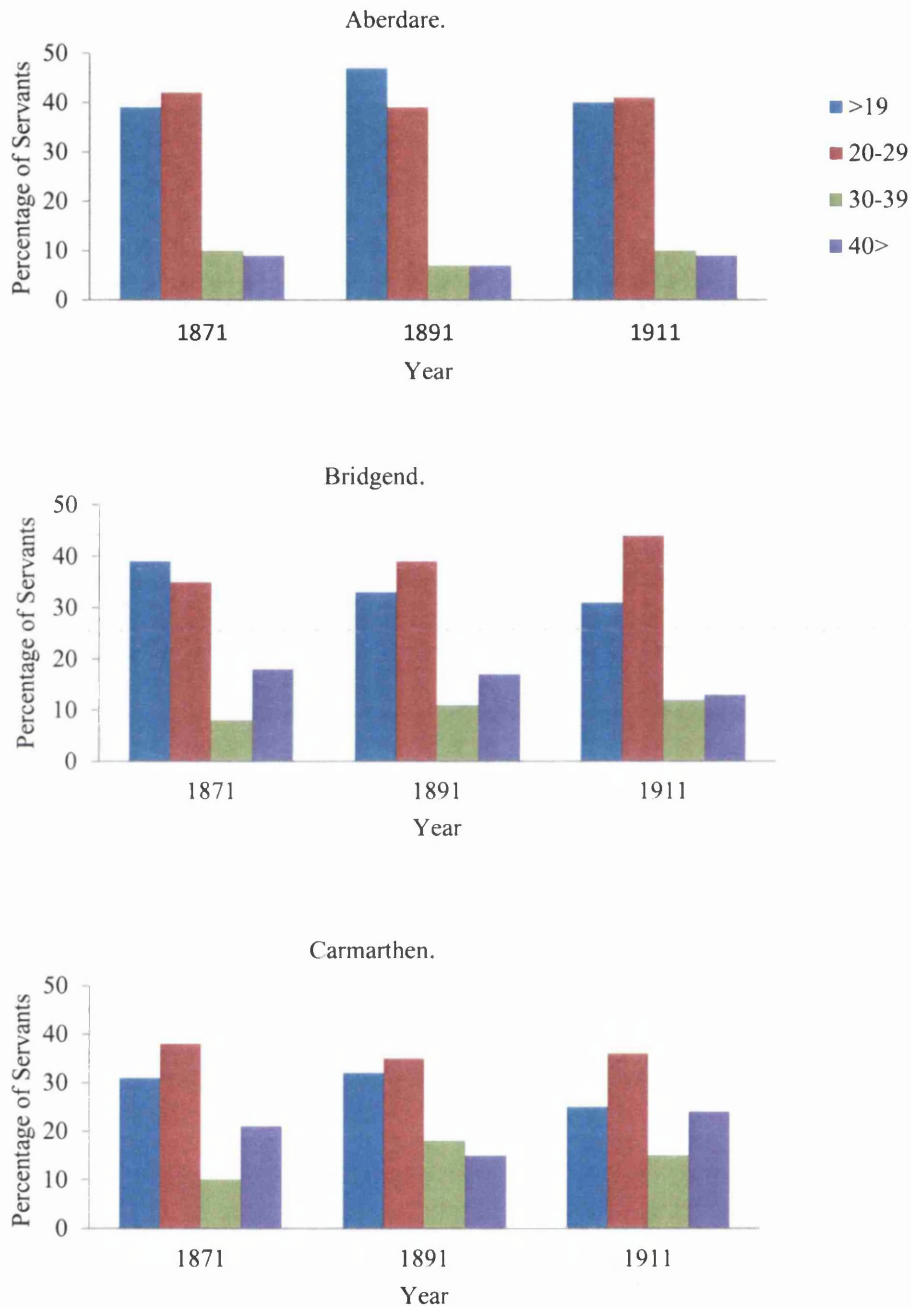
<sup>21</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 48.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*. p. 73.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*. p. 10.

workers remaining as career servants or re/entering the sector on a daily or part-time basis owing predominantly to financial reasons.

Figure II.I. Servant age group in Carmarthen, Aberdare and Bridgend (%).



Source: Census of England and Wales, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

The increase in the number of older indigent senior servants is also perceptible in Figure II.I. Almost one-quarter of all domestics analysed in

Carmarthen were over 40 years of age by 1911.<sup>24</sup> In Bridgend the dominant trend was the replacement of the under 19's with the 20 to 29 year olds as the largest group of workers.<sup>25</sup> This pattern also occurred in Aberdare to a lesser extent and later on in the time period. These results provide a slight contrast to the findings of Ebery and Preston on English towns, where the largest group of workers (28 percent) were shown to be in the 15-19 age bracket.<sup>26</sup> The increasing proportion of older servants in Carmarthen and Bridgend, however, do reflect Horn's findings that there was a significant increase in the number older workers in Britain during the era.<sup>27</sup> The fewer mature workers in Aberdare may have been the result of the narrower employment opportunities for women on the coalfield hindering the decline of young maids. The weaker tradition of female employment, especially after marriage, also potentially contributed to the smaller proportion of older workers in the sector.

Table II.I. The average age of domestic servants in the three case-study towns by gender.

Town	Male	Female
Aberdare	36	22.9
Bridgend	34.5	25.5
Carmarthen	34.7	28.1

Source: *Census of England and Wales*, 1871, 1891 and 1911, sampled data for Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen.

Despite entering employment, the expectation that the majority of young maids would leave work on marriage remained and as a result 'stop-gap' servants were the largest category in Britain. As their time in service was viewed as a temporary life stage, it had little real impact on their matrimonial prospects or age at first marriage. In south Wales there was a direct correlation between the average marital age and average servant age reinforcing the notion that the majority of servants used the industry as a temporary occupation until matrimony. Yet, in the three case study towns there was a degree of variation between servant ages. In

<sup>24</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>25</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Bridgend 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>26</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 30.

<sup>27</sup> Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 10.

Aberdare, servants were on average 24.1 years old, in Carmarthen 25.8 years and at their oldest in Bridgend at 26.8 years.<sup>28</sup>

The low average in Aberdare can be attributed to the early marriage age on the coalfield at just 22.6 years for miner's wives in 1884.<sup>29</sup> The average age of solely female servants in Aberdare was the same as the average marriage age for the coalfield.<sup>30</sup> The early marriages and the small proportion of menservants in the town, both contributed to the town's young servant demographic. Bridgend had the highest figures owing to the higher presence of male domestics in the town inflating the overall average age. Bridgend's actual average female servant age was 25 years. This very closely reflects the mean marital age for women in Wales as a whole during the nineteenth-century of 24.9 years.<sup>31</sup> Carmarthen's possession of a more mature workforce has already been noted and its results have been influenced by a number of factors. It was the average age of the female, rather than the male servants, that was significantly elevated above that of the other two towns, at 28.1 years.<sup>32</sup> The traditional nature of the positions with a higher proportion of senior status roles such as ladies maids and companions partly accounts for this trend. The rural and westerly position of the settlement may also have failed to attract young migrant workers in the same way that towns in Glamorgan would have done. The exodus of young men from Carmarthen to more industrial areas in the late nineteenth-century, led to a higher ratio of women in the town and therefore fewer marriage prospects, forcing many women to work longer.<sup>33</sup> In this respect Carmarthen's patterns were similar to that of New York's Irish community where a higher ratio of single women than men served to delay the age at first marriage.<sup>34</sup> Many women were compelled by the absence of potential husbands to remain in service for a longer duration than perhaps initially intended. In such a way the 'stop-gap' servant often became a 'career' one.

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<sup>28</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>29</sup> D. Jones, 'Counting the Cost of Coal: Women's Lives in the Rhondda, 1881-1911' in A.V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1839* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p.113.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> N.F.R. Crafts, 'Average Age at First Marriage for Women in Mid Nineteenth-Century England and Wales', *Population Studies*, 32 (1978), p. 23.

<sup>32</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>33</sup> J. Lodwick, and V. Lodwick, *The Story of Carmarthen* (Carmarthen: St. Peter's Press, 1995) p.194.

<sup>34</sup> Gross, 'Domestic Labour as a Life Course Event', p. 402.

Rather than delaying marriage, domestic service provided an accessible form of employment for women for the duration of their single lives, however long that was to be. Therefore, the lifecycle of servants in Wales differed from those in countries such as France. Historians of servant marriage rates in Europe have often argued that maids married less frequently and had a higher average marital age than the rest of the female population although this has not always been found to have been the case.<sup>35</sup> Yet, in France the necessity for a dowry delayed marriage age for many women. In Bordeaux 42 percent of maids married after the age of thirty while in Versailles the figure was even higher at 45 percent.<sup>36</sup> For men the age was much older. In England and Wales, however the lack of a need for a dowry meant that entry into service did not delay marriage although average marital age did impact on the average age of 'stop-gap' servants in Wales.

The entry of older non-residential females into the industry was facilitated by the shortage of young maids willing to live-in. This gave employers little option but to accept daily and part-time labour, as demonstrated in the previous newspaper extract and argued in Stephen Gross' examination of American servants.<sup>37</sup> Yet, British-based studies have tended to focus on the reasons behind the ready supply of women wishing to enter or re-enter the sector later on in life, such as personal hardship.<sup>38</sup> Whichever supply factors were most instrumental a significant proportion of the servant workforce were engaged on a daily (non-residential) basis between 1871 and 1911. Aberdare had the lowest presence of 'dailies' (20.9 percent) reflecting the younger age of its domestics and the larger number of 'maids of all work' engaged in the town. Bridgend and Carmarthen had a significantly higher proportion of servants living-out at 29.4 and 30.9 percent respectively. This appears particularly high if we compare it to the British figures that indicated that only 40 percent of female servants were not residing with their employers, twenty years later

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<sup>35</sup> R. Sarti, 'All masters discourage the marrying of their male servants, and admit not by any means the marriage of the female: Domestic Service and Celibacy in Western Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth-century' in *European History Quarterly* 38 (2008) p. 440; T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820- 1920* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976), pp. 87-88.

<sup>36</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup> Gross, 'Domestic Labour as a Life Course Event', p. 413; 'The Ways of Women' *Western Mail*, 10 March 1900.

<sup>38</sup> S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880- 1914' in *Economic History Review* 62 (2009) pp. 405- 429 on p. 418; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 111.



in 1931.<sup>39</sup> The separation of home and work premises in the nineteenth century also increased the demand for part-time workers. Prior to the division, residential domestic servants could be expected to clean work space as part of their household chores. With work space such as solicitor's offices being located some distance from the owner's household, and the rise in institutions such as schools, part-time cleaners rather than live-in maids were increasingly required. Therefore, the movement from young maids to older dailies was the result of both changes in employer demand and servant supply.

Table II.II Average age for the twenty most frequently occurring domestic service occupations.

Servant Group	Occupation	Age
Business and Institution	Barmaid	23
	Boots	28
	Chambermaid	25
	Ostler	41
	Waitress	26
General	Maid-of-all-Work	23
Indoor Low-Status	Charwoman	44
	Housemaid	23
	Kitchen-maid	20
	Laundress	43
	Parlour-maid	25
	Scullery-maid	16
Indoor High-Status/Supervisory	Companion	34
	Cook	30
	Housekeeper	41
	Nurse	22
Outdoor	Chauffer	27
	Coachman	35
	Gardener	44
	Groom	29

Source: *Census of England and Wales*, 1871, 1891 and 1911, sampled data for Bridgend, Aberdare and Carmarthen.

The age and gender of a servant had a significant impact on the type of position held as demonstrated in Table II.II. The classification of domestics employed reflects that used in chapter one when analysing the occupational composition of the service industry in south Wales. The average age of servants in

<sup>39</sup> Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 37.

‘indoor high-status and supervisory’ roles was significantly higher (32 years) than their lower-ranking indoor colleagues (29 years).<sup>40</sup> The positions of charwoman and laundress attracted the oldest group of workers possibly owing to their casual and daily nature. Such women would have predominantly belonged to the ‘indigent seniors’ utilising service as a barrier against destitution in widowhood or else to supplement their family’s income during times of financial hardship. The engagement of older women in casual menial positions such as that of char or laundress was a well established practice by the end of the nineteenth-century. It has been estimated that the majority of charwomen in England and Wales were over 35 years during the era.<sup>41</sup> Just over one quarter of British charwomen were between 35 and 44 years, while the largest group (28 percent) were aged between 45 and 54.<sup>42</sup> As can be seen in Table II, the average age of charwomen in the three case study towns was 44 years. Meanwhile laundresses also had a high average age of 43 years. Such tasks were physically demanding, arduous and low-skilled. It is unlikely that any other reason than personal circumstance and financial hardship would have induced these mature workers to occupy such posts.

The average age of the remainder of the low-status staff was significantly younger at just 21 years, reflecting the average age of the ‘maids of all work’ at 23 and female business and institution staff at 25 years. As the average marriage age in south Wales was just 23 it would appear that those women who entered service as a ‘stop-gap’ before marriage were restricted to the lower positions.<sup>43</sup> The higher ranking positions of cook and housekeeper were often held by ‘career servants’, older women who had often worked their way up the servant hierarchy. Schlegel’s study of the industry in Hamburg, has highlighted the desirability of long-term career servants for senior roles. Her results demonstrated that half of all higher-status servants in the city were between 25 and 45 years of age.<sup>44</sup> In contrast, Juliet Gardiner’s work on life in stately homes has revealed that less than 10 percent of British lady’s maids were over 40 years of age.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, significant variation

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<sup>40</sup> *Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 1911.

<sup>41</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 30.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Jones, ‘Counting the Cost of Coal’, p.113.

<sup>44</sup> K. Schlegel, ‘Mistress and Servant in Nineteenth-Century Hamburg: Employer/Employee Relationships in Domestic Service, 1880- 1914’ in *History Workshop* 15 (1983) p. 75.

<sup>45</sup> J. Gardiner, *Manor House: Life in an Edwardian Country House* (California: Bay Books, 2002) p. 124.

existed between the different occupations which further highlight the impact of industry definition on the observed demographic patterns in the sector. Like the Hamburg study, the south Wales figures have shown that the average age of cooks in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen was 30 years while, companions were 34 years and housekeepers 41 years of age. Many of these women would have been 'indigent seniors' who secured positions in more modest establishments during periods of financial difficulty, as demonstrated in newspaper advertisements that read:

wanted, a respectable person as good plain cook; middle aged; wages, £20, all found widow preferred. Also good housemaid: wages £16; small family; country. Apply stating age, references, etc. Broadway, Laugharne, Carmarthenshire.<sup>46</sup>

This may have been owing to the desirability of the experience and skills a widow would have possessed having once managed her own household. Others would have been long-term career servants that had worked their way up the servant hierarchy. These were often found in more affluent homes such as Tredegar House. Yet, even in stately homes such as Tredegar House an increase in the age of senior posts was clearly visible.<sup>47</sup> In 1871 eighteen year old housemaid Elizabeth James was engaged. Yet, by 1911 seventy-five year old Mary Calway was occupied in the post. At the start of the period, the housekeeper, Ann Kail, was fifty-five yet by the end of the era Tredegar's housekeeper, Rosabella Frost, was seventy years old.<sup>48</sup> This may have been the result of the increasing difficulty in acquiring young staff or low turnover of domestics in larger households.

Male servants, largely found occupying 'outdoor' positions, were generally older than many of their female indoor counterparts. Their average ages ranged from 27 to 44 owing to the skilled nature of the work performed. Even ostlers, who were exclusively hotel and inn based were significantly older than their female colleagues owing to the level of skill required. Men also tended to stay in the industry for the duration of their working lives, while a significant number of women left the sector before ever reaching the higher status roles. Gardeners, one of the most skilled positions, had the highest average age of any of the male posts at 44 years. However, the average age of more menial jobs such as boots who polished the shoes of hotel

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<sup>46</sup> Situation Vacant, *Western Mail*, 15 April 1901. In this context it would seem that the description 'middle aged' was used to refer to people around 40 years of age.

<sup>47</sup> *Census of England and Wales*, Tredegar House, Newport, 1871 and 1911.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

guests among other duties, was significantly lower at 28 years. Yet, this figure is somewhat misleading, as the role was generally occupied by teenage boys or older men. Male servants also experienced an increase in average worker age between 1871 and 1911 as once again exemplified in the case of Tredegar House. The butler in 1871, Edward Staines, was listed in the census enumerators returns as being forty-one years of age. In 1911, butler Edward Perrott was twenty-one years his senior.<sup>49</sup> This resembles the overall increase in the average age of the servants employed at Tredegar House from 26.3 to 37.3 years.<sup>50</sup> Female servants were generally much younger than their male counterparts owing to the low-skilled nature of many female positions and limitations placed on women by matrimony and motherhood. In the three towns menservants were approximately between seven and thirteen years older than female domestics. The largest difference occurred in Aberdare where girls were at their youngest and men their oldest. This reflects the domination of heavy industry in the town that restricted the employment opportunities of young women and absorbed the majority of young male labour.

These trends were echoed in the employment columns of the *Western Mail* newspaper. Most women who advertised or were sought through the newspaper columns were between 20 and 29 years of age. A smaller number of servants under 20 were sought through the paper and even fewer girls of this age group actually placed adverts in the *Western Mail*. However, as displayed in Figure II.II, women of 30 or over were much more likely to advertise for a post than their younger counterparts. This is reflected in the type of posts available with a high number requesting 'positioned maid', cooks and housekeepers all of which were held by older females. It therefore appears that the women in south Wales primarily used the *Western Mail* employment columns to move between posts or to re-enter domestic service in later life rather than as an entry route into the sector. The dangers associated with responding or placing advertisements, and the large demand for young maids locally militated against their need to locate work through the newspaper.

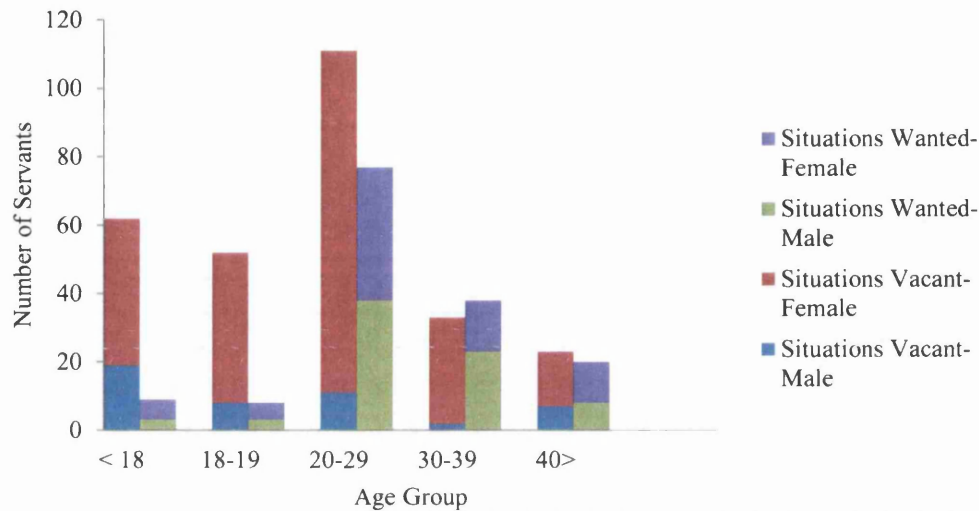
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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

The number and type of servant recruited was largely dependent on the personal situation and wealth of the employer.<sup>51</sup> Factors such as widowhood, illness, children and old age all influenced the likelihood of a family requiring paid staff.<sup>52</sup>

Figure II.II. A comparison of the age and gender of servants sought by employers and those servants wanting positions.



Source: *Western Mail*, Sample of 'situations vacant' between 1871 and 1921 for adverts where an age or age range was stated.

Employer demography has featured little in the body of secondary literature on domestic service, which has tended to focus largely on the workforce. Yet, some significant variations have emerged concerning the natures of the employers in the three case-study towns. These had a notable impact on the type of servants employed and the character of the service industry as it operated in each location. Firstly, as Table II.III demonstrates, the average age of servant employers, in Carmarthen, Aberdare and Bridgend, increased slightly between 1871 and 1911 as lifestyles began to change and sourcing domestics became more problematic. .

The eldest employers were to be found in Carmarthen reflecting the social composition of the town's population. In Carmarthen there was a higher number of older people (9.4% of the population in Carmarthenshire were over sixty compared to 5.7% in Glamorgan). Elderly people often required domestics for assistance as a

<sup>51</sup> L. Davidoff, and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987), p. 388.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

matter of necessity, and many preferred to employ older companions and maids.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, a town's population demographic appears to have had an important influence on the nature of the industry. Servants had a particularly important role in assisting in households where additional domestic assistance was needed as well as desired. Examples of this would be in the absence of a homemaker, during periods of sickness or in old age. This is evident in the situation vacant columns of the *Western Mail* with housekeepers and companions being frequently sought by widowers and older householders. One typical example read 'working man requiring reliable housekeeper (widow, girl 6)', while another simply stated 'a good working companion required for elderly lady'.<sup>54</sup> It should also be noted that the average age of the employers overall, was higher in 1911 than in 1871. This reflects several key trends in society and service, such as increased migration leading to more geographically dispersed families. The effect of this development may have been a greater need for paid assistance in the households of elderly people in the absence of their kin. Demand may also have been stimulated by longer life expectancy and increased need for assistance in old age. Senior members of society also had less difficulty recruiting staff as domestics preferred households without children where the workload was lighter.<sup>55</sup>

Table II.III. Average age of employers of domestic servants in the three towns in 1871, 1891 and 1911.

Census Year	Aberdare	Bridgend	Carmarthen
1871	39.9	42.5	50.7
1891	43.5	50	49.9
1911	46.5	44.7	53.8
Total Ave.	43.3	45.7	51.5

Source: *Census of England and Wales*, 1871, 1891 and 1911, sampled data for Bridgend, Aberdare and Carmarthen

The youngest employers were to be found in Aberdare owing to the high proportion of lower paid general maids, high male employment and early marriage age (average male age at first marriage 24 years) which made employer status

<sup>53</sup> *Census of England and Wales: Report and Tables 1871*: (3) p. 553; Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 74.

<sup>54</sup> 'Situations Vacant', *Western Mail*, 15 November 1921 and 15 February 1921.

<sup>55</sup> C. Steedman, 'A Boiling Copper and Some Arsenic: Servants, Childcare and Class Consciousness in Late Eighteenth Century England' in *Critical Inquiry* 34 (2007) p. 51.

accessible to younger householders.<sup>56</sup> The fact that many employers were younger also may explain why the industry in the town was comprised of a significantly higher level of 'maids of all work'. The younger employers were more inclined to employ younger staff and had less need or desire for specialised roles. Therefore the younger employers as well as factors such as limited alternative sources of female employment led to a high level of 'stop-gap' maids, while the presence of cheaper servants made servant-employer status obtainable to younger people.

Marital status also impacted on the quantity and type of servants engaged. On average, approximately three quarters of servant employers in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen were married. The major exception to this was the census results for Carmarthen in 1911, where just over half (59 percent) of employers were married. The second largest group of employers were widows. This is particularly significant in Carmarthen owing to the older population demographic. In 1911, 29 percent of employers in Carmarthen were widows, an increase of six percent from 1871. Aberdare and Bridgend, in contrast, experienced a decline in the proportion of widowed employers. The greatest quantity of single employers was found in Bridgend in 1911 where 23 percent were listed unmarried or widowed. In 1871 and 1891 only six percent of employers had never married.<sup>57</sup> Carmarthen also saw a slight increase in the number of single employers increasing from five percent in 1871 to 12 percent in 1911.<sup>58</sup> This increase may reflect the higher number of young women entering into middle-class professions requiring domestic help. In Aberdare the number of single employers declined from ten to seven percent.<sup>59</sup> However, personal circumstance was not the only factor governing servant recruitment. This is best demonstrated by the lack of correlation between family size and the number of servants employed. Despite declining family sizes in all three towns, only Carmarthen experienced a decrease in the average number of servants per household. This suggests that as the period progressed live-in domestic servants became increasingly confined to a smaller number of wealthier households as well as businesses and was, therefore, not entirely connected to employer need.

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<sup>56</sup> Jones 'Counting the Cost of Coal', p.113.

<sup>57</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Bridgend, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>58</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1871 and 1911.

<sup>59</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, 1871 and 1911.

Table II.IV. A comparison of changes in the average number of domestic servants in a household and the average family size in the three towns in 1871, 1891 and 1911.

Town	Number of Servants			Family Size		
	1871	1891	1911	1871	1891	1911
Aberdare	1.4	1.9	2.8	4.4	4.2	3.8
Bridgend	1.8	2.2	3.1	4.4	4.3	3.5
Carmarthen	2.8	1.9	1.9	4.4	4	2.9

Source: *Census of England and Wales*, 1871, 1891 and 1911, sampled data for Bridgend, Aberdare and Carmarthen.

Although the majority of employers were married the majority of servants were single. The results for the three towns reveal some stark variations reflecting differences in the character of the industry as it operated in the respective settlements. In Bridgend and Carmarthen 86 percent of servants were single. In Aberdare the proportion was slightly higher at 92 percent.<sup>60</sup> This reflects the higher proportion of young ‘maids of all work’ in Aberdare. Their age, gender and the common residential requirement militated against a high number of married and widowed workers. Mining towns also had a weaker tradition of women being engaged in long-term paid employment.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, Aberdare’s domestic service sector was comprised largely of young, ‘stop-gap’ workers as opposed to career servants and those re-entering the sector owing to personal hardship.

Despite the high proportion of single workers, there was no formal or legal marriage bar operating in the industry. Depending on the position desired and employer preference, it was possible for married women to enter service. Although Ebery and Preston’s study of several nineteenth-century English towns revealed that only eight percent of indoor servants were married or widowed, a study of the census enumerator books for the three case-study towns reveals that the figure was significantly higher in Wales. An analysis of all categories of domestics in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen indicates that approximately twelve percent of servants had been married.<sup>62</sup> This was in spite of widely held social ideals that discouraged married women from working and demonstrates the importance of considering regional differences.

<sup>60</sup> *Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>61</sup> M. A. Williams, *A Forgotten Army: Female Munitions Workers of South Wales 1939-45* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), pp. 264- 271.

<sup>62</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian*, p. 30.



Between 1871 and 1911 two other trends were visible in the census statistics. Firstly, Bridgend had a distinctively high number of married domestics, which continued to increase throughout the period. In 1871, eight percent of servants in the town were married, yet by 1911 the figure had increased to twelve percent.<sup>63</sup> In contrast Carmarthen's proportion of married workers increased from only five to seven percent, and Aberdare's declined from seven to just over five percent.<sup>64</sup> This trend again reflects the nature of the industry in the towns, most notably the high volume of male long-term career servants in Bridgend's domestic service workforce. The majority of these male positions were non-residential, skilled posts such as gardeners and grooms and, therefore, enabled servant marriage. These results resemble the findings of Sarti that married male domestics were more common than married females.<sup>65</sup>

Table II.V. A comparison of servant marital status in three case-study towns (%).

Town	1871			1911		
	Married	Widowed	Single	Married	Widowed	Single
Aberdare	7.2	3.6	89.2	5.4	2.7	91.9
Bridgend	8.4	4.8	86.8	12	2.5	85.4
Carmarthen	5.5	12.5	81.9	7.2	8.2	84.5

Source: *Census of England and Wales*, 1871 and 1911.

The final significant marriage trend visible in the Table II.V. was the high number of widows working in Carmarthen, reflecting the increased presence of indigent senior workers. At the start of period twelve and half percent of domestics in the town were widowed. By the end of the period analysed the proportion had fallen to just over eight percent.<sup>66</sup> Yet, this was still higher than the level found in the other two towns. In Bridgend and Aberdare, in 1911, only approximately two percent of the servants sampled were widowed.<sup>67</sup> Carmarthen's figures reflect the population demographic of the town with a high ratio of women to men and a significantly older populace.<sup>68</sup> Throughout the era in Wales, most widows were females over forty and Carmarthen had the highest number of servants fitting that profile, making it

<sup>63</sup> *Census of England and Wales*, Sample for Aberdare, Bridgend, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Sarti, 'Domestic Service and Celibacy in Western Europe', pp.436- 437.

<sup>66</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>67</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare and Bridgend 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>68</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, pp.13 and 17.

unsurprising that it possessed the highest concentration of widowed domestics.<sup>69</sup> It is apparent that marriage did not prevent women from entering service during the period. While few servants had been married in Aberdare, in Bridgend the industry was a form of employment for a significant number of married men, and for Carmarthen's widows it provided a vital source of income. Therefore, the character of domestic service reflected the needs of the individual communities regardless of any gendered ideologies that nineteenth-century society may have held.<sup>70</sup> The evidence for South Wales shows that marriage did not fully prevent employment in the domestic service industry, although it did make it less likely and restricted the type of work engaged in.

A study of the 'positions wanted' advertisements also suggests that unmarried workers were in greatest demand in south Wales. They reveal that the number of married and widowed servants seeking work through the *Western Mail* paper was greater than the number of adverts requesting married or widowed servants.<sup>71</sup> It was the young 'stop-gap' workers and single career servants who were most sought-after by householders. Of the employers who were willing to recruit married male servants, the desire to utilise the wife on a part-time or casual basis, performing laundry or dairy work was often specified. For example, one employer from Tenby sought a 'man and wife, the former to act as groom and assist in the garden and make himself generally useful; the wife the family washing; wages 25s per week with good cottage and garden'.<sup>72</sup> Several such adverts were published where the wives were required to perform a specific chore as part of an employment package. Other employers sought servant couples to work full time, running smaller establishments, such as vicarages and doctor's surgeries. For instance, the advertisement for a post at one vicarage read 'married couple wanted for clergyman and wife; middle aged preferred; man to attend to housework and act as chauffeur; wife cook-general. Apply with references Cardiff'.<sup>73</sup> This advert gave far more recognition to the role of the wife with both being required to work full-time in separately defined posts. It is also less likely that the second employer would engage a married couple with children as it was most likely that the staff would be required to live in the vicarage

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid, pp. 29 and 34.

<sup>70</sup> Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, p. 14.

<sup>71</sup> Situation Vacant Adverts, *Western Mail*, 1871-1921.

<sup>72</sup> Situation Vacant Adverts, *Western Mail*, 15 September 1891.

<sup>73</sup> Situation Vacant Adverts, *Western Mail*, 11 October 1921.

not in a separate cottage. The longer hours demanded by the vicar would also militate against a mother occupying the post, while taking in laundry would be far more suited to women with children. The wife in the first example could be categorised as an 'indigent senior' as her husband's position, and therefore the family income, was heavily reliant on her assisting in the family's domestic chores. In the second case the wife would have been one of the few married female career servants in south Wales.

Marriage was not the only hindrance to female employment during the period. Elaine Jordan has argued that marriage was not the main cause of unemployment amongst young women.<sup>74</sup> Rather, other factors were influential such as limited opportunities, personal circumstance and family duties.<sup>75</sup> In 1911 only two percent of British girls between 15 and 19 years of age were married but female unemployment was 22 percent higher than amongst men of the same age.<sup>76</sup> Compared to other occupations, domestic service owing to its multiple occupations and its flexible nature remained accessible to workers even after marriage. The variable employer demands, locations, duties and hours of work made the sector a more convenient form of employment than many other industries, where such factors were more regulated and less negotiable.

A significant barrier against any form of employment in domestic service was parenthood, particularly for unmarried young women. The high number of servants with pre-marital pregnancies has been widely discussed in several texts on the industry, with particular reference to Glamorgan.<sup>77</sup> However, obtaining reliable statistics on the number of illegitimate births to domestic servants in the period has proved difficult. It has been estimated that in South Wales 21.87 out of every 1000 single women gave birth. This was higher than both North Wales (19.65) and the overall UK average (20.91).<sup>78</sup> However, the north of England had a higher level of

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<sup>74</sup> E. Jordan, 'Female Unemployment in England and Wales 1851- 1911: An Examination of the Census Figures for 15- 19 year olds', *Social History* 13 (1988) p. 175- 190.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Horn, *Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* p. 136-7; E. S. Turner, *What the Butler Saw: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Servant Problem* (London: Penguin Publishers, 2001) p. 230; J. Barber, 'Stolen Goods: The Sexual Harassment of Female Servants in West Wales during the Nineteenth-Century', *Rural History* 4 (1993) p. 128; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 105.

<sup>78</sup> 'Regional Variations in Illegitimacy 1860/1'. [www.staffs.ac.uk](http://www.staffs.ac.uk), [accessed 25 June 2012].

illegitimate births, Cumberland being top of the list (32.82).<sup>79</sup> It is unknown how many of these were servants. Given the fact that domestic service was the largest employer of women in the UK, it would stand to reason that a significant proportion of these women were or had been in service at some stage. However, John Gillis' examination of illegitimacy has indicated that the number of births to unmarried domestics was disproportionately high in London. In the workhouses at Marlebone, St. Pancras and St. George's (Southwark) 57.2 percent of confined women were servants.<sup>80</sup>

The figures compiled by Staffordshire University, as part of their study on regional variation in illegitimacy rates, also cast doubt on the notion that rural servants were more likely to fall pregnant.<sup>81</sup> Theresa McBride and Gillian Barber have both asserted that country girls were more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, more likely to use infanticide as a form of contraception and less likely to find illegitimate pregnancies socially ostracising in their own communities.<sup>82</sup> This has been attributed to the isolation and the more open minded view of pre-marital sex in rural communities, in contrast to the more conservative, urban bourgeois sensibilities.<sup>83</sup> Yet, the statistics reveal that it was the industrialised south of Wales rather than the more rural north that had higher illegitimacy figures. Gillis has suggested that rural girls were the most likely to fall pregnant before 1850 but that urban servants, prohibited from having followers and so forced to conceal their relationships, were the most likely to become pregnant in the later half of the nineteenth century.<sup>84</sup> Out of the 2000 servants sampled only two women were listed as single mothers. Both were engaged as charwomen and lived alone with their child. Elizabeth Vaughan, a 44 year old grocer's daughter from Carmarthen, was the only servant listed in the 1911 census as having an illegitimate child.<sup>85</sup> Her 15 year old son Llewellyn Arthur Vaughan was employed as a stationer's assistant in the town. It would appear that Elizabeth was also compelled to take in lodgers. Two Russian pedlars, Joe Cohen and Abraham Kahan, were listed as boarding at her house in

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> J. R. Gillis, 'Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risk of Illegitimacy in London, 1801-1900', *Feminist Studies* 5 (1971), p. 144.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Barber, 'Stolen Goods', pp. 124, 125, 128 and 129; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 104.

<sup>83</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 104.

<sup>84</sup> Gillis, 'Servants, Sexual Relations, and the Risk of Illegitimacy', p. 146.

<sup>85</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1911.

Wood's Row.<sup>86</sup> Another charwoman, resident in Magazine Row, Carmarthen in 1871, was 54 year old farmer's daughter Elizabeth Evans.<sup>87</sup> She was listed as living alone with her 11 year old son David. Particularly noticeable in both cases is the advanced age of the women, with Elizabeth Vaughan having been 29 at the time of her child's birth and Elizabeth Evans 43 years old. It is possible that it was their maturity and willingness to work as charwomen that facilitated their lives as openly unmarried mothers (In one instance the child was labelled illegitimate on the census enumerator book). Yet the rarity of such cases demonstrates that few unmarried mothers worked as servants and those who did were engaged in unskilled, daily positions, like most 'indigent seniors' workers.

While cases of servants with illegitimate children continuing to work in the sector were rare, attitudes were more flexible in regards to married servants with children. This enabled the engagement of a higher number of 'long- term career' and 'indigent seniors' servants. Overall, the census sample suggests that nearly nine percent of domestics had children during the period. In Aberdare, five percent of all sampled servants had children of which 64 percent were men.<sup>88</sup> In Bridgend seven percent had offspring listed as residing with them of which 63 percent were male servants and in Carmarthen ten percent of servants had children with only 31 percent of parents in service being male.<sup>89</sup> The percentage of servants with children could be even higher as many would have had adult children who had left home or young children living with relatives. Numbers were lower in Aberdare owing to the fact that the workforce was largely comprised of young, single maids of all work. Carmarthen's results may be attributed the increased presence of older women in the town.<sup>90</sup> Throughout the period the number of parents employed in the sector declined in Carmarthen and most notably in Aberdare but increased in Bridgend. This again may reflect the gender and age composition of the industry in the respective towns. The majority of servants with children lived out, being employed on a casual or daily basis. For situations where servants were desired to live in employer accommodation, the willingness to engage servants with children varied. Yet, despite E.S. Turner's claim that some of the best servants were those with children to support, the overall

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1871.

<sup>88</sup> *The Census for England and Wales*, Aberdare 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>89</sup> *The Census for England and Wales*, Carmarthen 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>90</sup> Lodwick and Lodwick, *The Story of Carmarthen*, p. 194.

impression created by the sources is that children were more of a hindrance than an asset when it came to securing work.<sup>91</sup> This is evident in the way employers often referred to children as 'encumbrances' in the advertisements, demonstrating that many employers were highly prejudice against employing servants with children even for skilled, male positions. For example a typical advert stated, 'Wanted immediately, married couple (no encumbrance), live indoors- Wife good plain cook, Man groom, willing to make himself generally useful- state particulars Mrs Bayliff, Laleston, Bridgend, Glamorgan'.<sup>92</sup> Other employers were not so strict in their unwillingness to employ parents, as demonstrated by one employer that conceded that he would accept an employee with a child as long as the child was old enough to be of use.<sup>93</sup> The advertisement read, 'wanted, competent groom- coachman; middle aged; married; no encumbrances, or with one son as stable lad preferred; must be well up to his work and good references- Mr. Walter Evans, Eaglesbush, Neath'.<sup>94</sup>

The high demand for servants rendered the sector accessible to a broader cross-section of society. As the number of 'maids of all work' waned and employers became increasingly dependent on day and part-time servants a gradual shift in the character of the workforce took place. By 1921 the engagement of older and married women was a more regular occurrence. This altered the role of service in the lives of women and the way it functioned and was perceived in wider society. During the study period domestic service did largely remain the domain of the young, single and childless yet, neither marriage nor maturity proved an impenetrable barrier to engagement in the sector. Crucially though, both factors influenced the nature of the position held and eventually the overall character of the industry as it operated in each town. Individual entry into service was motivated by a variety of factors and the occupations held were largely determined by personal circumstance and the requirements of potential employers. The needs of the employers and the level of their personal wealth had a significant role in governing the type of servants they hired. Therefore, worker life cycle and the socio-economic nature of individual towns were two prominent factors that shaped the character of the Welsh domestic service industry.

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<sup>91</sup> Turner, *What the Butler Saw*, p. 226.

<sup>92</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 15 July 1901.

<sup>93</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 1871-1921.

<sup>94</sup> Situations Vacant, *Western Mail*, 15 April 1901.

### III

#### **The Formalisation of Servant Recruitment Methods in South Wales.**

A study of recruitment methods is essential to our understanding of domestic service as an industry and the way it functioned in south Wales. It provides an insight into the unregulated nature of the sector and the way this influenced entry into service. Recruitment methods shaped wider public perceptions of the industry as the process of finding a position was fraught with potential danger especially for young girls. The absence of a formal entry route led to a broad workforce demographic and enabled service to be used as a charitable tool to remedy some of society's social ills. To this end destitute women and children were channelled into the industry along with the sons and daughters of the respectable working classes and even middle-class spinsters. The accessibility of service also led many people to regard it as a convenient, if somewhat perilous, vehicle for rural to urban migration and even emigration. Therefore, an examination of the ways in which servants were engaged is crucial to our wider understanding of the industry.

Urbanisation and the expansion of the middle classes during the mid-nineteenth century had a significant impact on servant recruitment methods and consequently the character of the workforce in south Wales. Urbanisation led to disintegration of traditional social networks and increased demand for servants in commercial, business and institutional establishments.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the higher number of middle-class households also elevated demand for domestic help.<sup>2</sup> These trends shaped the sector in two ways. Firstly, heightened demand led to an increase in the size of the sector. As a result of the large and unregulated nature of the domestic service industry, a number of impersonal entry routes emerged such as 'situation vacant' advertisements in the local press and recruitment agencies. This marked a transition from potential servants using familial and social contact through 'word of mouth' and local recruitment fairs, to their reliance on strangers to secure positions. For many this exacerbated the danger connected to entry into the industry as disreputable agencies and misleading adverts lured women into crime and

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<sup>1</sup> T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820- 1920* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976), p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> J. Light, *'Of inestimable value to the town and district?' A Study of the Urban Middle-Classes in South Wales with Particular Reference to Pontypool, Bridgend and Penarth c. 1850-1890* (Cardiff University: PhD Thesis, 2003), p. 33.

destitution.<sup>3</sup> Although urban areas were fairly quick to adopt new ways of recruiting staff, rural communities continued to rely on the older methods of hiring fairs and social contacts. The eventual changeover was the result of economic pragmatism and rural depopulation.

Secondly, high demand also resulted in fears over servant shortages and the need to secure a reliable supply of workers into the industry. Yet, the charitable enterprises were motivated as much by the need to remedy social problems (especially those relating to women) as the desire to broaden worker supply. Consequently a number of charitable and religious organisations attempted to guide criminal, immoral and pauper women into service. This study has established that south Wales was a key area for the emergence of these charitable schemes. This may have been the result of the dominance of the industry in the female labour market and the influence of benevolent nonconformist culture. However, this chapter will show that attempts to alleviate the servant shortage through the engagement of reformatory inmates backfired. While it 'succeeded in producing an army of inexpensive female domestics available to a wider range of households than ever before' and provided a lifeline to the destitute, it also stigmatised the sector and deterred many 'respectable' women from entering its workforce.<sup>4</sup> Fears over the safety and reputation of servants contributed to the growth in the proportion of low skilled general servants and older daily cleaners as these were the groups least able to secure work in other professions. It is evident therefore, that the lack of organisation or centralisation of the service industry led recruitment in the industry to be comprised of charitable programmes, commercial enterprises and individual initiative and this in turn had a significant impact on the wider character of the industry.

This chapter explores the transition from local and informal recruitment methods to more organised and impersonal schemes as the industry expanded. The utilisation of personal contacts, both familial and social, is first examined along with the continuation of hiring fairs in Wales. The development of local newspaper advertisements and servant agencies is then uncovered. Subsequently the chapter will demonstrate the significance of charitable schemes organised by philanthropic

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<sup>3</sup> M. A. Williams *A Forgotten Army: Female Munitions Workers of South Wales, 1939- 1945*. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 143; P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975), p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> F. K. Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service in Victorian England' *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research*, 54 (1981) p. 84.



individuals, local authorities and religious organisations. These included: Lady Rose Mary Crawshay of Cyfarthfa Castle; the Cottage Homes Institutions; the Angela Street Mission at Cardiff Docks; the North Wales Temperance Society; the National Vigilance Association; the Girls Friendly Society; and most notably the Salvation Army. These organisations were instrumental in encouraging many people into service, helping existing servants (especially those far from home) and facilitating the safe transport of domestics to the colonies.

Servant recruitment has not featured prominently in academic studies possibly owing to the limited and fragmented nature of the sources available. It is generally acknowledged that recruitment agencies and newspaper advertisements were important methods of locating work, however they have received little detailed attention. Instead, recruitment has chiefly featured in debates surrounding the stigmatisation of domestic servants. Focus has been directed at the dangers young maids encountered on entering the sector. Mari A. Williams has outlined the problems surrounding newspaper adverts in her exploration of Welsh servants in London during the inter-war era.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, Pamela Horn and Theresa McBride have discussed some of the problems surrounding recruitment agencies during the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Yet, it has been argued that despite social anxiety and the very real dangers to young girls alone in distant towns and cities, women continued to enter the sector owing to economic hardship.<sup>7</sup> The opportunity for respectable young women to fall into a life of immorality through service has not been the only factor suggested to explain the stigma surrounding the industry. The widespread practice of directing paupers, prostitutes and criminals into the lower ranks of the industry through various benevolence schemes has also been blamed for generating a negative view of the overall service workforce.<sup>8</sup> The motivational factors behind the establishment of such initiatives have been highly debated. F.K. Prochaska's article, entitled 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service in Victorian England' is a key secondary source on the topic. Prochaska argues that 'the insatiable demand for servants was an important element in nineteenth-century benevolence, and it played a particularly significant part in women's voluntary work' as 'in the nation's charitable

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<sup>5</sup> M.A. Williams, 'The New London Welsh: Domestic Servants 1918-1939' *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 9 (2003) p. 143.

<sup>6</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, pp. 40-1; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 77.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, 'The New London Welsh', p. 143.

<sup>8</sup> Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service', p. 84.

and public institutions benevolent women provided an education and enforced rules which they believed would turn their female charges into faithful servants'.<sup>9</sup> Charity was therefore, as much a method of increasing the supply of servants as it was a way of 'saving' the poor and the needy. Subsequently, recruitment into the domestic service industry has been presented as both a form of salvation and danger. The reality behind these public fears has yet to be explored at length.

A diverse range of primary evidence has been incorporated into this study of servant recruitment methods. This is the result of the numerous entry routes into domestic service that existed in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Wales. Some of the older recruitment methods were informal and it has proved fairly difficult to evaluate their significance and gain a deeper insight into their role in the industry. This was especially true of the utilisation of social and family contacts in securing work. Although there is no way of quantifying the number of positions gained through such networks the frequency with which they were alluded to in the personal testimony of ex-servants such as Ada Carter, Margaret Mostyn Davies, Bessie Hopkins, Mrs Wriggley and Mrs Landon suggests that it was a popular method of finding positions.<sup>10</sup> Evidence of recruitment fairs, like many aspects of the rural domestic service sector, has also been difficult to unearth. Most of the information presented on this is extracted from published accounts of 'mop fairs,' either from newspapers or the writings of the American consul Wirt Sikes.<sup>11</sup> Later methods of recruitment have been easier to examine owing to their more formal and structured nature. The role of newspaper advertisements can be observed through a quantitative analysis of the numbers published and the nature of the vacancies offered and sought. Charitable attempts at directing women into domestic service in south Wales can also be explored in great depth. Although the sources are fragmented, organisational and published records provide considerable information on a range of charitable and religious organisations. The impact of recruitment agencies on the sector has also been observed through tracing their presence in local trade directories. The most widely documented agency was that established by Lady Rose Mary Crawshay

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> SWML: AUD/470-490, Women's: Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley Study, Audio Recordings; NLW: MS 23511A, Journal of Margaret Mostyn Jones, 1861; NLW: EX 1906, The Reminiscences of Ada Carter.

<sup>11</sup> W. Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, Rivington, 1881).

during the 1870s. Many pamphlets, transcripts of speeches and press accounts exist that detail the organisation of her 'lady-help' scheme.

One of the most traditional ways of entering domestic service in Wales was through the utilisation of personal, especially familial, contacts.<sup>12</sup> This can be seen in the account of Margaret Mostyn Davies when outlining how her father had secured her the position of maid in the Llanover household, having himself been employed as a gardener on another of the family's estates in north Wales.<sup>13</sup> The census case-study has also provided a glimpse into the hereditary aspect of service with many children having followed their parents into the sector. The census enumerators' books are littered with cases such as 51 year old gardener, Frank Coxes, who had entered the sector like his father before him and moved from Somerset to Carmarthen to take up a post.<sup>14</sup> The offspring of domestic servants could utilise family contacts to secure work and were more likely to possess the skills and knowledge required for the positions. This trend was highly noticeable amongst male servants, however, it is significantly more difficult to trace through the female line, owing to change of surname and short durations of employment. Yet, some instances have been detectable such as the case of 16 year old general servant, Elizabeth Evans. As she continued to reside at home it was easy to ascertain that her 41 year old mother, Margaret, was also engaged in service as a char woman.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, the non-residential nature of the positions held by sisters Emily and Lydia Burrows in Aberdare, also highlighted how service occupied several generations of the same family.<sup>16</sup> The eldest, 27 year old Emily was a char woman like her mother, while her younger sister was occupied as a daily 'maid of all work'. In both cases the mothers were widows, seemingly reliant on their own and their daughters' wages. Therefore, the accessibility of service and the possibility of utilising family connections frequently led to numerous members of a family finding work in the industry.

Even when relatives, particularly parents, had not been engaged in the sector for a number of years, they could still prove useful in helping young people to source

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<sup>12</sup> S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880-1914' *Economic History Review* 62 (2009) p. 419.

<sup>13</sup> NLW: Journal of Margaret Mostyn Jones.

<sup>14</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1911 and Somerset 1871.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, Carmarthen, 1891.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, Aberdare, 1891.

work.<sup>17</sup> This is exemplified in Winn Anderson's account of how her own parents employed both general servant Gladys, who left to marry a local dry dock worker and, years later, their daughter Rosie. Anderson describes Gladys as 'very correct and superior', while 'Rosie seemed to do everything at a terrific pace. You'd see her flitting about the house, running up and down stairs, apparently never stopping. The strange thing was that very little work ever seemed to get done. I suppose that is a sort of gift she had'.<sup>18</sup> Scullery maid, Ada Carter, also typified this trend, following her mother into work at more elite establishments.<sup>19</sup> Her memoirs briefly outlined how her mother, a former chambermaid, had given up a situation in the Royal Crescent at Bath to marry a violent Somerset miner. The family moved first to Devon then to Port Talbot, where Ada in 1914, at the age of just thirteen 'went to bed with the *South Wales Echo* and read through the recruitment advertisements by candlelight'.<sup>20</sup> In so doing she escaped a troubled home life and initiated a career that took her from her first position at Dynevor Castle to the estate of the Duke and Duchess of Somerset, and on to the London home of a wealthy German banker.<sup>21</sup> Although her account suggests that she was able to secure the position independently of her family it may be assumed that the previous engagement of her mother in a prosperous home would have strengthened Ada's application for a highly sought after position at Dynevor Castle.

Family contact also led to a consecutive number of siblings entering the sector. It was not unknown for employers to hire sisters as was the case with Mrs Landon, whose position in London was filled by her younger sister when her own health began to fail.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Bessie Hopkins also initially went to Swansea to replace an older sister who had been brought home ill.<sup>23</sup> This practice ensured that no income was lost to the family as many servants sent their wages home. Other siblings used their knowledge of the industry to source employment for their younger sisters. An article in the *Girls Own Paper* in September 1885 outlines how widespread the practice had become. It claimed that:

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<sup>17</sup> P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth-Century* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001) on p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> W. Anderson, *A Rather Special Place: Growing up in Cardiff Dockland* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993), p. 61.

<sup>19</sup> NLW: The Reminiscences of Ada Carter, (NLW ex 1906).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> SWML: AUD/399, Women's' Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley, Audio Recordings.

<sup>23</sup> SWML: AUD/482 Women's' Work Experiences.

the eldest of a family who gets a situation and does well, frequently sends for her sisters in turn, and helps them to obtain employment. Sometimes a first place has not been a success, or the younger girl has not had sufficient experience to fill it properly, and leaves, after a brief term of service. Then the elder sister has a painful sense of responsibility lest the young one should come to harm. I have known mere girls watch over such juniors with a tender care exceeding that of some mothers. Sometimes they have deprived themselves of really needed articles to help out the newcomer's wardrobe; they have paid for decent lodgings for her, and even undertaken to settle the doctor's bill in case of sickness. I once remonstrated with a young girl about doing too much, as I feared that her sister did not appreciate her self-denial...Tears came into the girl's eyes as she said, 'there are so many of them at home, and I brought her here to relieve father and mother. I will not send her back to them, if I can help it.'<sup>24</sup>

Personal testimony has also illustrated how many servants were unwilling to seek work alone, preferring to remain close to siblings. Another ex-maid, Bessie Hopkins, from Ystradgynlais, recollected how she turned down several offers of work despite having been unhappy in her post, as she wished to stay in the Mumbles area to be near a sister in service close by. Having been brought up in a close knit family with seven siblings, being near at least one relative was more important than finding a good mistress.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, the entry of a sibling into the sector not only facilitated recruitment of other members of their family but also acted as a way of ensuring the safety of younger girls and helped alleviate homesickness.

Beyond familial connections, wider community ties also enabled people to find work. For girls entering the sector for the first time social contacts were invaluable. Respected members of the community such as shopkeepers, vicars and doctors often took it upon themselves to find respectable positions for potential maids of their acquaintance providing references and even training.<sup>26</sup> This is illustrated by the account of Mrs Wrigley, a shoemaker's daughter born in Cefn Mawr in 1858 that,

when I was about nine, the vicar of the church asked if I would go to be with his children and take them out. There was another servant, but I did not stay for long, for we were rationed with our food and everything was locked up. My mother was glad for me to go out for food alone. I had been at home a few days when the doctor's wife came to our house and said a lady and gentleman

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<sup>24</sup> R. Lamb, 'Servants and Service', *Girls Own Paper*, 5 September 1885.

<sup>25</sup> SWML: AUD/482 Women's Work Experiences.

<sup>26</sup> B. Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 173; Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 37.

wanted a little nurse for their child, to go back with them to Hazel Grove, near Stockport.<sup>27</sup>

Mrs Wrigley's experience reveals that working locally could be just as challenging, depending on the situation, as relocating to the other side of the country. However, the use of such contacts, it was hoped would mitigate some of the dangers surrounding the more impersonal forms of recruitment that had begun to emerge in the late-nineteenth century. Mrs Wrigley's account not only revealed the importance of personal contacts but also demonstrated the long-distance over which the networks could operate as urbanisation and migration flourished. Some employers specifically sought servants from their home towns. This was the case with Mrs Landon, an ex-maid who migrated to London to take up a post with employers from her village. She told of how 'they were people from Brynamman. They lived in Brynamman and they happen to come on holidays there and they asked if I'd like to go back with them'.<sup>28</sup> In 1871 almost fifty percent of the servants sampled in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen originated from the same counties as their employers. By 1911 fewer than thirty percent did so, suggesting that the long-distance social networks had begun to breakdown and that new impersonal methods of recruiting staff had become more common.

Another traditional way of sourcing domestic staff in Wales was through annual hiring fairs. A 'mop fair' (so-called because of the items such as mop heads that the servants carried to denote their occupation) was essentially a recruitment event where prospective employers selected staff, both domestic and agricultural, for the next twelve months.<sup>29</sup> Both parties congregated at a central meeting place, where the servants would line up and await selection. In Neath for instance, the event was conducted outside the Blue Bell Inn before being moved outside the Gwyn Hall.<sup>30</sup> Terms of service were then agreed upon and the employer would pass a shilling to the new servant. This was regarded as a legally binding agreement.<sup>31</sup> Over time these events developed a more social dynamic leading Frank Dawes to describe them as a

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<sup>27</sup> M. Llewelyn Davies, *The Classic Life as We Have Known It: The Voices of Working-Class Women* (St Ives: Virago Press, 2012), Mrs Wrigley, 'A Plate-Maker's Wife', p. 64.

<sup>28</sup> SWML: AUD/399 Women's Work Experiences.

<sup>29</sup> L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p.63.

<sup>30</sup> G. Eaton, *The Story of Neath's Fair: 1280-1980*, (Neath: Borough Council, 1980), p. 14. The Gwyn Hall was a public hall and municipal offices built in 1882 and funded by Alderman Howell Gwyn.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

‘servant’s carnival’.<sup>32</sup> The American travel writer Wirt Sikes provides one of the most detailed descriptions of these fairs. He wrote that:

to these fairs troop men and maidens in vast numbers, on fun and profit both intent. Having stood waiting in the market-place till they have found masters who will pay them for the coming year the small wages they demand, and so laid out for themselves twelve months of good work, Sion and Mari feel like celebrating their success. So when the shades of evening fall, the serious work of the day being done, the merriment waxes furious. The streets are so densely thronged with people that it is impossible to move among them, vehicles cannot go about at all, and this is not attempted. Torches light up the scene; drums beat; hawkers and cheap Johnes brawl; Punch and Judy add their squeaking to the din; and any Mari or Catti whose waist is not encircled by the arm of Twm or Sion, is a reproach to the traditions of her race.<sup>33</sup>

Such fairs were commonplace throughout Wales during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Advertisements have been discovered for hiring fairs in Narberth, St Clears, Llanboidy, Brecon, Aberystwyth, Monmouth, Abergavenny, and Cardiff, to name but a few.<sup>34</sup>

By the second half of the nineteenth century the ‘mop fair’ was under threat, although it managed to live on in a small number of rural areas until the 1920s.<sup>35</sup> The movement of workers from the countryside to the expanding towns and cities was partly responsible for its general decline yet social anxiety surrounding the events also resulted in calls for its end. Criticism was directed at both the hiring process itself as well as the wider social component. The judiciary were particularly vociferous in their criticism of the fairs. In an after-dinner speech to the Llanboidy Agricultural Society, a local magistrate branded them ‘dens of infamy’ and claimed that ‘from his experience as a magistrate of the number of masters and men who got into trouble with young women, and were brought before the bench. It was a thoroughly bad system, existing in this country, and he believed it was the bounden duty of the farmers to devise some better plan’.<sup>36</sup> Three years later another member of the judiciary, Judge Falconer, in presiding over a case in Aberdare ‘remarked that a woman who would go to a mop fair could not have any religion or any regard for

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<sup>32</sup> F. V. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: A True Portrait of Upstairs, Downstairs Life* (London: Century in Association with the National Trust, 1973), p. 112.

<sup>33</sup> Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales*, pp. 194 and 196. Mairi, Catti, Twm and Sion are used by Sikes as generic Welsh names.

<sup>34</sup> Various newspaper advertisement and articles, *Western Mail* 1869-1900; Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales*, p. 194.

<sup>35</sup> Lethbridge, *Servant*, p. 163.

<sup>36</sup> ‘Christmas Show at Llanboidy’, *Western Mail*, 20 December 1876.

her domestic welfare. The scenes he had witnessed at such fairs at Cardiff, Brecon, Monmouth, and such places were such as shocked every domestic feeling and were conducive to immorality'.<sup>37</sup> Their views reflect those recorded by the *Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture* (1867). A Reverend Williams was quoted as claiming that 'mop fairs are a fruitful source of evil', had a 'very demoralising effect' on the workers and needed 'abolishing for good'.<sup>38</sup> All these extracts highlight the generally disapproving attitude of the professional middle-classes to the continuation of mop fairs in rural Wales.

Amongst the farming community opinions were more divided and were centred less on morality and more on efficiency.<sup>39</sup> Recruitment fairs were 'a reminder of a lingering tradition of those looser, unregulated servant master relationships that were woven into the fabric of rural life'.<sup>40</sup> Traditionalist farmers sought to retain this sense of informality and fought attempts at modernising century old customs.<sup>41</sup> Yet more progressive employers desired a change in the method of recruiting domestic and agricultural workers in order to overcome many of the weaknesses of market place hiring fairs. They argued that they rendered farmers vulnerable to fraud as 'unscrupulous servants, boys especially, will sometimes go from fair to fair, hiring out to several masters in turn, and then giving them all the slip'.<sup>42</sup> The Llanboidy Agricultural Society thought it a 'good plan to organise a system of registration, by which good servants might obtain proper situations, and respectable farmers efficient and trustworthy servants'.<sup>43</sup> It is unknown whether they were able to achieve such a goal given the migrant nature of the workforce and the lack of support from the old guard. Yet, the debate suggests that the eventual demise of the fairs as a form of recruitment was partly the result of worries over their usefulness rather than purely moral anxiety.

The mounting opposition against 'mop fairs' during the late-nineteenth century is indicative of the growing demand for organised recruitment across the

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<sup>37</sup> 'An Aberdare Publican and His Wife', *Western Mail*, 11 December 1879.

<sup>38</sup> CCL: *Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture* (1867).

<sup>39</sup> Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales*, p. 197.

<sup>40</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales*, pp. 197 and 200.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 197.

<sup>43</sup> 'Christmas Show at Llanboidy', *Western Mail*, 20 December 1876.



industry as a whole. The 'situation vacant' newspaper advertisements were a significant, yet impersonal, method of locating service work in Wales. The *Western Mail* was a particularly important source of both local and national vacancies. In 1871 there was an average of fifteen advertisements for domestics published each day. By 1921 that figure had increased to 86, demonstrating the growth in the popularity of the *Western Mail* as a way of recruiting servants.<sup>44</sup> The advertisements were generally placed by urban-based employers. Cardiff accounted for the most significant number of sampled adverts (673). This was followed by Newport (190) and then Swansea (180) owing to the more easterly focus of the newspaper. Other significant towns included Penarth (95), Merthyr (50), Bridgend (46), Neath (45) and Pontypridd (42), all of which were highly populated areas in the more industrialised county of Glamorgan. This demonstrates that newer methods of recruitment were adopted sooner in the urban centres than in more rural areas. It is also possible that town-based employers failed to establish the social networks in the more anonymous urban environment and so were compelled to rely on the local press more than their country counterparts.<sup>45</sup>

Newspaper advertisements were more closely associated with some service occupations than others. For example positions in business premises, especially hotels, accounted for around a quarter of all vacancies advertised. A quantitative analysis of the *Western Mail's* situation vacant columns has further revealed that female servants in their twenties were the most sought after demographic group. Although 'maids of all work' were unsurprising the most frequently requested role, higher-status staff such as cooks and housekeepers as well as specialist indoor workers such as housemaids and parlour maids were also in high demand. Only 17 percent of employers requested male servants, while 49 percent of domestics who placed advertisements in the hope of securing positions were men. These workers were generally looking for outdoor roles as grooms and gardeners. Meanwhile, the female servants in search of work were predominantly looking to secure skilled positions. This suggests that the situations vacant columns were frequently, but by no means exclusively, being used by long-term career servants seeking promotion up the service hierarchy.

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<sup>44</sup> 'Situations Vacant', *Western Mail*, Average of sampled newspapers in 1871 and 1921.

<sup>45</sup> E. Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', *Journal of Social History* 8 (1983) on p. 208.

The advertisements made vacancies beyond the immediate local communities more accessible. Some of the employers advertising in the *Western Mail* were located as far afield as London, Sheffield and Southampton. Meanwhile the servants seeking positions in south Wales were also occasionally based in distant towns and cities such as Liverpool, Winchester and Birmingham. While press adverts facilitated greater geographical movement in the sector it also enhanced the hazards facing young women. A pamphlet published by the Angela Street Mission based at Cardiff Docks described the problematic nature of newspaper advertisements and how they led many vulnerable and isolated women into prostitution.<sup>46</sup> It told of how:

an advertisement is put into the paper under a number for a clean, honest, respectable girl as help. Good home. A girl answers and receives an offer of fabulous wages. They accept the situation, a taxi cab is sent to meet them at the station and they are taken to one of these boarding houses.<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, instances of girls being lured to work in brothels through misleading advertisements occasionally resulted in criminal prosecutions as occurred in Aberdare in 1887 (see appendix IV and V for full details).<sup>48</sup> The landlord of the Fountain Beerhouse, Thomas Jones, was convicted at Aberdare Police Courts of ‘permitting his house to be used as a brothel’. As a result he was awarded the maximum penalty; a £20 fine or three months in prison. Servant testimony from the trial provided an insight into the way in which Jones recruited girls into prostitution and how he used domestic service as a cover for his illicit business activities. One barmaid, Elizabeth Thomas, left her job as a waitress at the Lord Nelson Hotel in Milford Haven to take up the post in Aberdare. Press reports described how:

whilst at Milford she saw an advertisement in the *Western Mail*, and in response to her reply she was engaged by the defendant, who wrote saying that he wanted a good-looking girl of nice appearances so as to attract custom. Mr Jones met her at the station, and when she got to the Fountain she saw Mrs Jones [the landlord’s wife] in the passage.<sup>49</sup>

This account demonstrates how girls accepted posts and travelled considerable distances to reside with strangers who they knew virtually nothing about. Even her wages had not been agreed before hand as she was only told the day after arrival that

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<sup>46</sup> GA: D/DX819/9, *Angelina Street Mission: A History*.

GTJ: Welsh Temperance Society Poster, [www.tlysau.org.uk](http://www.tlysau.org.uk), [accessed 15 October 2012]. The Angela Street Mission was an inter-denominational religious organisation established in 1906 by the Christian Community.

<sup>47</sup> GA: D/DX819/9, *Angelina Street Mission: A History*.

<sup>48</sup> ‘An Alleged Disorderly House at Aberdare’, *Western Mail*, 16 November 1887.

<sup>49</sup> ‘A Disorderly House at Aberdare’, *Western Mail*, 23 November 1887.

she would receive 10s a month, to which Elizabeth replied that 'if she had known the wages were so little she wouldn't have come'.<sup>50</sup> However, the promise of being met at the train station and the presence of a wife helped alleviate fears over the respectability of the establishment. Yet, two days after arriving Mrs Jones ordered Elizabeth to take a glass of ale to a guest in the parlour who then attempted to assault her. A few days later a second visitor also tried to take hold of her before entering a bedroom with another 'maid'. Upon reporting the incident to the landlord's wife she was told 'never mind, he has got plenty of money'.<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth soon left the pub and returned home to Milford Haven despite the landlord failing in his promise to purchase her a train ticket. A second servant, nineteen year old Jessie Cole, was also lured to the pub in a similar fashion having previously been engaged as a barmaid at the Tredegar Hotel in Cardiff. She also testified how girls regularly took men into the parlour and gave the money to Mrs Jones when leaving. She also left the premises, seeking refuge with a cousin living in nearby Trecynon. Therefore, without their own funds or the assistance of relatives both women may have been compelled to stay at the Fountain Beerhouse or else found themselves destitute and stranded miles from home.

The dangers facing young girls responding to situation vacant adverts was such a significant social concern that a number of charitable enterprises were established to safeguard these vulnerable workers. The North Wales Temperance Society, for instance, cautioned women against replying to newspaper advertisements.<sup>52</sup> It warned them not to accept distant posts without seeking their assistance in vetting the position before leaving home. In the eventuality that girls did run into any difficulty, and not being as fortunate as Jessie and Elizabeth who were able to return to their families, a number of safe-houses were set up which would give assistance until the girls could go home.

Problems facing migrant maids were so extensive that the Salvation Army also felt the need to establish the Women's Metropole and Laundry in 1891 at 12 Moira Terrace, Cardiff. One newspaper article described how 'women - otherwise homeless - receive nightly, upon the payment of four pence, the privilege of using

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<sup>50</sup> 'An Alleged Disorderly House at Aberdare', *Western Mail*, 16 November 1887.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> GTJ: Welsh Temperance Society Poster.



the comfortable sitting room, the stove for cooking, washing troughs for their clothes, baths for themselves, and clean, well made beds in small, partitioned-off rooms'.<sup>53</sup> The establishment of the home was largely a preventative measure that aimed to reduce the likelihood of servants being led astray through homelessness and bad company. The Metropole provided accommodation to women between posts and unsurprisingly most were newcomers to the town. At the time of the 1911 census 11 were from Cardiff itself, 9 originated from elsewhere in Wales, 18 were English, 5 were Irish and 1 came from Guernsey.<sup>54</sup> It was designed to assist a more respectable class of servant than those being channelled into the sector from the streets, the orphanages and the prisons. Of the domestics recorded at the address in 1911 there were seven laundresses, four charwomen, three cooks and a housekeeper (the remainder being described as general servants).<sup>55</sup> Half the women were recorded as either married or widowed and 28 were thirty or over, with the eldest being 73 years of age. This reveals that some older migrant servants paid for comfortable accommodation to avoid entering the workhouse.

Servants working in pubs and hostelrys were thought to be among the most vulnerable as they were continuously surrounded by male customers. The National Vigilance Association was instrumental in calling for the introduction of similar homes to the Metropole but for the exclusive use of barmaids and waitresses.<sup>56</sup> As well as improvement to their terms of service it was suggested that an exclusive centre for barmaids would greatly improve the moral quality of these workers. This was to be achieved through 'the introduction of a social element into the lives of the barmaids during their hours of relaxation from labour' as well as acting as a home for those between posts.<sup>57</sup> It was hoped that these measures would combat the evil influence of some employers and customers. The social anxiety conflicts greatly with the personal accounts of retired barmaids, for instance, one ex-servant, Mrs Landon, had only positive memories of her time working as an undercook in a club in Palmers Green, London while another, Bessie Hopkins, simply stated 'I went to a pub (Mason Arms, Ystradgynlais) to work... cleaning and behind the bar, everything... it was

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<sup>53</sup> 'Salvation Army Social Work in Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 7 December 1899.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> The Census of England and Wales, 1911.

<sup>56</sup> National Vigilance Association was formed in 1885. Its aim was to pressure the Government into passing a Criminal Law Amendment Bill to protect children and repress prostitution. [www.calmarchive.londonmet.ac.uk](http://www.calmarchive.londonmet.ac.uk), [accessed 25 June 2013].

<sup>57</sup> 'Proposed Girl's Club for Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 6 April 1900.

wonderful I had a lovely mistress... we were more like sisters'.<sup>58</sup> Yet, so great was the concern that 'legislation in favour of the employment of [only] male bar attendants, as was the case in America' was even suggested.<sup>59</sup> This reflects wider concerns over the well-being of women working on commercial premises. So significant were the worries that even the Australian Board of Immigration restricted the entry of barmaids into the country during the 1890s, through setting 'the condition that none of the girls (given free passage from Britain through the Girls Friendly Society) should be allowed to take service in a public-house or hotel'.<sup>60</sup> The proposals of the National Vigilance Association reflect homes established in America to assist Swedish maids.<sup>61</sup> The homes have been perceived as a symbol of the high-esteem in which the girls were held by their compatriots. This was thought to have assured the American employers of the quality of the servants and enhanced their public image. Mindful of the ever-present fear of a servant shortage the opening of a home for servants in Wales would, it may have been hoped, improve the reputation of the service workforce and thus entice more girls into the sector.<sup>62</sup>

Despite the well documented dangers a large number of girls continued to enter both private and commercial service, risking their lives and reputations through responding to unregulated newspaper advertisements well into the twentieth century. Mari A Williams explains that 'as economic conditions in their native districts deteriorated and families became increasingly desperate, vigilance and sensible precautions seemed to be thrown to the wind'.<sup>63</sup> Although this may have been true during the inter-war depression, the high demand for servants in the late-nineteenth century would have meant that many girls would have had a choice of positions. Yet, the vast growth in the number of middle-class employers and the relatively short duration of service made reliable vetting of distant posts advertised in local newspapers impossible or undesirable.

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<sup>58</sup> SWML: AUD/399 and AUD/ 482, Womens' Work Experiences.

<sup>59</sup> 'The Barmaid Question', *Western Mail*, 27 March 1900.

<sup>60</sup> CCL: GFS Llandaff Diocese Annual Reports, 'Department for GFS Members Emigration', (1892), p. 69.

<sup>61</sup> J.K. Litelman, 'Our Serving Sisters: Swedish- American Domestic Servants and their Ethnic Community' in *Social Science History* 15 (1991) pp. 382 and 389.

<sup>62</sup> 'Proposed Girl's Club for Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 6 April 1900.

<sup>63</sup> M.A. Williams, 'The New London Welsh', p. 143.

Hazards also faced householders who recruited servants through newspaper advertisements as they engaged strangers on the strength of a written character from a previous employer. Where no previous position had been held a training centre, charitable institute or a respected member of the community such as a shopkeeper, a vicar or a doctor could vouch for the potential employee.<sup>64</sup> Both servants and employers voiced concerns over the recruitment system, believing it to be unsuited to the practicalities of nineteenth-century domestic service. It was thought a residual feature of the early modern sector where service was largely the preserve of a few wealthy households.<sup>65</sup> With the expansion of the industry the character system became less dependable. The primary criticism of employers was the provision of inaccurate or misleading characters. Some householders exaggerated the accomplishments of servants out of kindness or loyalty. Meanwhile, others provided inflated characters to hasten the departure of a troublesome or incompetent maid. An outright dismissal may have resulted in the servant's social dissent which many employers were eager to avoid.<sup>66</sup> The character system rendered both maids and mistresses vulnerable in a number of ways and was, therefore, greatly disliked.

Likewise, servants lamented the fact that employers were able to withhold references as they saw fit. This gave them significant power over the conduct of their staff while engaged but also enabled them to influence the future prospects of their domestics. As a result many of the correspondents argued fervently for the introduction of legislation that compelled mistresses to provide a fair reference. For instance, 'A Poor Slavey' stated that 'I think that something ought to be done to deprive cruel and unjust mistresses of the absolute power they now have to refuse giving a servant a character and so very often preventing a homeless and friendless girl from obtaining a situation... until mistresses are compelled by some law to give girls a truthful character we cannot expect fair play, for they know they have us in their power, especially as in many cases girls have no home to go to'.<sup>67</sup> Likewise, 'Humanity' in Cardiff claimed that:

we enter their service quite with the intention of doing our duty, with a character, perhaps, better than their own, and then for some trifling reason we are told not to apply there for a character, perhaps for giving notice sooner than

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<sup>64</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 173; Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>66</sup> Editorial Columns, *Western Mail*, November to December 1892.

<sup>67</sup> 'A Poor Slavey, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 3 December 1892.

they thought we ought to...Hoping that some kind friend will take our cause up and introduce some ways and means of fairness upon our behalf by compelling mistresses to give a just character in handwriting upon our leaving their service.<sup>68</sup>

The second extract highlights another feature of the reference system that domestics appeared to take issue with, the fact that reference giving was only one way. For those servants reliant on newspaper adverts to find work, they were essentially compelled to enter a household without any certainty of the nature of the establishment or those they would be serving. Even some mistresses were able to perceive the danger claiming:

I quite agree with one of your correspondents that if a mistress's character was inquired into before her service was entered it would not bear comparison with the servant's, and I have often thought they should be at liberty to inquire into the respectability of the family in whose service they are about to engage. Why should there not be an exchange of references, I ask? But I know of cases where servants have adopted that plan and have then been told that they would not suit.<sup>69</sup>

Another formal and impersonal method of recruitment, that also depended on the reference system was 'servant registry offices' or 'domestic employment agencies', as they were also known.<sup>70</sup> Local trade directories have revealed that there were approximately eleven agencies based in south Wales between 1871 and 1920.<sup>71</sup> These were frequently found in the affluent neighbourhoods of more urban areas with Canton and Roath in Cardiff being common locations. This suggests that the agencies generally provided more specialist servants to higher class employers. Most of the agencies were run by married women owing to the feminised nature of the sector and possibly as a way of reinforcing the respectable image of the business. However, much like the mop fairs and newspaper advertisements, the lack of regulation surrounding recruitment agencies was a constant source of alarm. By 1919 the fear that disreputable agencies were being used as a cover for prostitution was so widespread that the County Borough Council of Swansea introduced a byelaw

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<sup>68</sup> 'Humanity, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 1 December 1892.

<sup>69</sup> 'A Mistress, Blackwood', *Western Mail*, 5 December 1892.

<sup>70</sup> LSE: HD6/D41 R. M. Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen; Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and the Principal Towns and Places of South Wales* (Sheffield: Kelly and Co, 1891).

<sup>71</sup> *Kelly's Directory* (1891); *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London: Kelly's Directory Ltd, 1920); *The Post Office Directory of Monmouthshire and the Principal Towns and Places in South Wales* (London: Kelly and Co, 1871).

governing their activities.<sup>72</sup> The legislation introduced a requirement that agencies were to retain signed copies of servant details, company books, and receipts. They also prohibited the engagement of ‘any person or persons of loose or immoral character’ or for them ‘to be in or about or to assemble, or meet together, in the registered premises’. The residential nature of some of the registries was also severely curtailed. Servants were only permitted to sleep on the premises provided they had their own bed in their own room and full details were once again to be kept. These developments followed the introduction of legislation in 1907 that empowered the municipal authorities in London to licence servant registries in the capital city. The enactment of such laws elsewhere was inconsistent.<sup>73</sup> Yet, the introduction of the legislation in Swansea demonstrated an increasing recognition, on the part of local authorities, that to control prostitution and improve the safety of servants they needed to regulate certain facets of the domestic service industry.

Despite the dangers presented by disreputable registries, it has been claimed that agencies were ‘the most efficient form of offering or finding work’ and certainly Lady Rose Mary Crawshay of Cyfarthfa Castle felt an agency was the most expedient way of recruiting middle-class gentlewomen for higher status positions in affluent households.<sup>74</sup> For many women of genteel origin, entry into service was both a necessity and degradation. In the same way that service was seen as a way to help the destitute, it was also believed an important remedy to the issue of surplus middle-class women or ‘distressed gentlewomen’ as they were commonly known.<sup>75</sup> During the mid-nineteenth century there were over 900,000 more women than men in Britain.<sup>76</sup> The position of a governess was often the only respectable option available to middle-class spinsters. Yet as the nineteenth century progressed the number of governesses began to exceed demand.<sup>77</sup> With limited employment opportunities many of these women fell into ‘genteel poverty’.<sup>78</sup> At the same time fears were

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<sup>72</sup> WGAS: TC15/44, Sealed Copy Bye Laws with Respect to Registries for Female Domestic Servants, 1919.

<sup>73</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 41.

<sup>74</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, p. 62.

<sup>75</sup> LSE: Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen*.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, p. v. In Wales the surplus was much smaller. In 1871 there were only 487 more women than men in the country and in 1921 there were actually 3514 more men in Wales according to J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, Vol. 1. (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press, 1985), p. 7. This does not take into consideration the social group to which the ‘surplus’ women belonged.

<sup>77</sup> K. Hughes, *The Victorian Governess* (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), p. 37.

<sup>78</sup> LSE: Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen*, p. 33.



circulating about a potential shortage of servants as well as the declining quality of workers, as reformatory servants were channelled into unspecialised lower status posts. Mrs Crawshay devised a scheme that would help alleviate both problems simultaneously. She advocated the engagement of the unmarried and widowed female 'relations of gentlemen' as upper servants in private households. These included the daughters and sisters of 'farmers, of surgeons, physicians, solicitors, clergymen, colonels in the army, and of admirals in the navy, besides those of literary men'.<sup>79</sup> The unintended impact of the scheme may have been to improve the quality of the workforce and the reputation of the industry, but first and foremost the idea was promoted as a form of charity for impoverished middle-class women.<sup>80</sup>

It is not known how many people passed through her agency however the scheme received a considerable amount of attention in the national press.<sup>81</sup> The *Women's Herald* in 1892 described how in the 1870s 'there was probably not a single newspaper in the United Kingdom that had not some leader or paragraph or other comments upon the extraordinary projects. There was not a drawing-room, club or office, where the possibility and propriety of women of birth, who could do nothing else for a livelihood, performing domestic services for a fixed salary, was not discussed'.<sup>82</sup> Mrs Crawshay herself was described as being 'of lady help celebrity', with the proposal having brought her 'name into enormous prominence'.<sup>83</sup> Accounts of her speech to the British Association at the end of August 1875, report a considerable attendance by both ladies and prominent public figures. The *Daily News* described how the hall was so packed with listeners that the 'president and secretaries had to fight their way through passages to the platform; and by and by the pressure became so great that the reporters table was swept away to afford room for the ladies, who charged like an impetuous squadron of light cavalry into the few square yards of space left by the retreating newspaper men'.<sup>84</sup> Lord Aberdare was said to have been 'whirled about in a vortex of muslin and silk, while Lord Amberley was borne in upon a heavy wave, and left high and dry on a ledge near the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid, p. 39.

<sup>80</sup> 'Interview: Mrs Rose Mary Crawshay', *Women's Herald*, 19 March 1892.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> 'The British Association at Bristol', *Daily News*, 28 August 1875.

platform'.<sup>85</sup> Regardless of the actual popularity of the agency there is little doubt that the issue certainly captured the interest and the imagination of the British public. A retrospective article featured in the *Women's Herald* clearly viewed the lady help system as a success. The recruitment agency was still functional twenty years after its establishment although it conceded that 'the lady help office is no longer as popular and useful as it was some years ago'.<sup>86</sup> This was attributed to the increasing number of employment opportunities available to women by the end of the nineteenth century and the smaller number of so-called 'surplus' women in British society. Therefore, servant recruitment agencies may be said to have largely catered for higher status employers and servants and were consequently the most formal method of sourcing work.

The 'lady-help' scheme was one of many charitable initiatives that sought to use domestic service as a convenient tool for remedying social problems. Both private groups and local government institutions directed the needy and the poor into the industry. Consequently, charities and religious organisations had a significant role in locating domestic service vacancies for women in south Wales. The Salvation Army played a significant role as demonstrated in the establishment of a number of homes, training centres and non-profit registries in Cardiff at Moira Terrace, Charles Street and later Newport Road. This formed part of a nationwide network of schemes based in Glasgow, Liverpool, London, Bristol, Plymouth, Portsmouth and Newcastle that sought to equip friendless and destitute women with the skills and opportunity to earn a respectable living as a servant.<sup>87</sup> The selection of port towns indicates that places with docks were viewed as the key areas in need of their assistance. Rather than trying to increase the number of servants or help the poor it would appear that their efforts were a direct attempt at reducing the number of prostitutes, many of whom may have worked near docks. The location of the homes in Cardiff is also suggestive as all three streets neighboured Cardiff Prison and was, therefore,

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid: Henry Austin Bruce 'Welsh Biography Online', [wbo.llgc.org](http://wbo.llgc.org) [accessed 1 June 2014]; Lord Amberley 'Oxford Dictionary of National Biography', [www.oxforddnb.com](http://www.oxforddnb.com) [accessed 1 June 2014]. Lord Aberdare held many positions such as Home Secretary to William Gladstone, Fellow of Royal Society and First President of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire. Lord Aberdare had a particular interest in education, while Lord Amberley (living in Chepstow) was a Liberal politician, son of prime minister, John Russell, and writer with a particular interest in female suffrage.

<sup>86</sup> 'Interview: Mrs Rose Mary Crawshay', *Women's Herald*, 19 March 1892.

<sup>87</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Cardiff, 1891; 'In Darkest England: Inauguration of the Scheme at Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 1 September 1891.

conveniently situated to target ex-convicts. These programmes were designed to assist destitute women, reduce the dangers surrounding servant recruitment and to enhance the supply of maids in the hope of alleviating the servant shortage. The 1906 *Salvation Army Year Book* described the 'Rescue Home' situated at numbers 9 and 10 Moira Terrace as 'an institution or home into which women who have lost their character are received, and where they are cared for and encouraged to abandon their evil life, trained for service or some other form of industry, and led where possible into the enjoyment of salvation. Situations are obtained for them when they have to leave the home, and they are watched over afterwards'.<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile, the 'Receiving Home', next door in number 11, dealt with the admission of women to the home and the assessment of their character and needs, while the 'Rescue Home' in Charles Street was designed 'for young girls, preventative cases and women with babies'.<sup>89</sup> A pamphlet produced by the home in 1885 entitled '*Free Registry and Training Home for Young Servants*' claimed that its function was 'to receive young girls from 13 to 16 years of age, and give them an elementary training in domestic service... It is intended for girls whose parents are very poor, widowed or infirm, and who are unable to provide suitable clothing, and training for service'.<sup>90</sup> However, the pamphlet attempted to keep expectations of the girls low, reiterating that although 'many appear to have the impression that mistresses may here obtain skilled service; they are mistaken as considering the raw material upon which we have to work this is manifestly impossible'.<sup>91</sup>

The young and destitute were not the only ones directed into domestic service by the Salvation Army. In Moira Terrace, the women were not simply poor or friendless but very often regarded as positively immoral, including prostitutes, drunks and criminals amongst their numbers. Of the 126 surviving admission records for girls entering the Cardiff receiving home during the 1890s, a quarter had drink problems while nearly a third were known to have been involved in criminal activity. The offences of the women were not always made explicit although a significant number were connected to prostitution. The Salvation Army had a close relationship with the local police service and Cardiff prison in the late-nineteenth century. Cardiff

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<sup>88</sup> SAIHCA: *Salvation Army Year Book*, 1906.

<sup>89</sup> 'Salvation Army Social Work', *Western Mail*, 7 December 1899.

<sup>90</sup> CL: 948.2 536 LAD, '*Free Registry and Training Home for Young Servants*' Pamphlet, 1885, p. 4.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

prison is thought to have been one of the first in the country to allow Salvation Army members in for visitations, while the police courts encouraged activities such as the dissemination of ‘framed cards of invitation to friendless girls’.<sup>92</sup> It was said that ‘the policemen of Cardiff try as hard as do the prison and police court officials to further our work. We have several good cases sent us by the Police’.<sup>93</sup> This is evident in the admissions forms completed in the Receiving Home. For instance, in May 1897, 17 year old Minnie Cross, after her internment for vagrancy, was met at the prison gate by a Salvation Army Officer and conveyed to Moira Terrace before being found a situation in Albany Road, near Roath Park, five months later.<sup>94</sup> In the autumn of that same year 36 year old Alice King also passed through the home after serving a prison sentence ‘for assisting in the management of a brothel’. She too was found a position as a servant in Colum Road, Cardiff.<sup>95</sup> However, the home was not able to find work for all ex-offenders in their care nor could they compel women to take up a post. In 1898, for instance Agnes Adams (also known as Agnes Richards and Mary Stone) was handed over to the home by the judge at the Assizes after being held on remand for a month for ‘being mixed up into a false money making business’.<sup>96</sup> Rather than entering service she was released into the care of a friend in Abergavenny. Yet, the majority of women passing through the home were directed into paid service where they could be kept under close supervision by both their employers and members of the Salvation Army. Between 1889 and 1891, 149 girls passed through the Rescue Home; 93 subsequently entered into service, 24 ‘proved unsatisfactory’, 17 were returned to the care of their family and friends, seven required hospital treatment, six were transferred to other charitable institutions, one married and one migrated.<sup>97</sup> Therefore, the Salvation Army homes in Moira Terrace and Charles Street were instrumental in directing unfortunate women into the domestic service industry.

Although charitable initiatives were present throughout Britain, they had greater prevalence in Wales as a result of the Nonconformist culture, the higher proportion of working women engaged in service, and the presence of concerns aroused by the 1847 *Report into the State of Education in Wales* or ‘Blue Books’ as

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<sup>92</sup> SAIHCA: ‘Women’s Social Work in Cardiff’, *The Deliverer*, May, 1900; ‘Personal Notes’, *The Deliverer*, March, 1901.

<sup>93</sup> SAIHCA: ‘Prison and Police Court Work in Cardiff’, *The Deliverer*, November, 1902, p. 66.

<sup>94</sup> SAIHCA: Receiving Home Admissions forms, p. 38.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 227.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179.

<sup>97</sup> ‘In Darkest England: Inauguration of the Scheme at Cardiff’, *Western Mail*, 1 September 1891.

they became known. The report portrayed Welsh women as sexually immoral, the wider populace as insubordinate and the culture as primitive.<sup>98</sup> A considerable difference of opinion has emerged from the limited secondary literature concerned with the motivations behind female philanthropy. Juliette Gardiner has claimed that 'wealthy women's interest in charitable works was not always entirely altruistic: the 'servant problem' in the nineteenth century had partly been seen as one of the degeneracy and unreliability of many of the young women in service. By involving themselves in charitable institutions...the rich benefactors would ensure a flow of more satisfactory results to domestic service.'<sup>99</sup> However, Steinbach has claimed that middle-class philanthropists were motivated not by the servant problem but by Evangelical Christianity as evident in the 'moral judgement' that often accompanied their charitable activities.<sup>100</sup> They aimed to instil middle-class values into the beneficiaries of their charities as well as providing the much needed practical help. The half a million 'professional or semi-professional' female philanthropists that operated in 1900 were said to have been motivated by the sense of 'purpose', 'agency' and 'action' that their work provided.<sup>101</sup> It is also suggested that many women would have been highly conscious of the precarious nature of their own positions in life and so would have had greater sympathy for those women fallen on hard times. As Steinbach explains 'many middle-class women must have been quite aware that they were only one generation or one catastrophe away from being working class or poor themselves; this knowledge may have inspired them to help those less fortunate, perhaps in part to solidify their own class status'.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, charity was believed to have been motivated by wider issues than merely concerns for the well-being of working-class women and servant girls. This is particularly notable in discussions surrounding the engagement of workhouse staff. Hecht has claimed that the number of workhouse inmates entering service was severely restricted by social prejudice.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, Huggett has also suggested that workhouse girls were undesirable as they displayed more hostility towards their

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<sup>98</sup> G. T. Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), pp. 13, 17, 19 and 163.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> S. Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004), pp. 52-3.

<sup>101</sup> Steinbach, *Women in England*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> J. J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1956), p. 120.

employer and were largely incompetent.<sup>104</sup> However, Huggett and Prochaska have both argued that the recruitment of destitute girls was predominantly motivated by the need for cheap labour rather than social anxiety.<sup>105</sup> However, this did not mean that service was not an important lifeline to many impoverished women.<sup>106</sup> Therefore, the literature presents a tension between philanthropy as the result of social concern and as a form of exploitation.

Similarly to the Charles Street Rescue Home, the local government run Cottage Homes also sought to place children as young as thirteen into domestic service. As well as being an economical solution to child care and a way of increasing the supply of cheap domestic labour, such placements were also viewed as a form of apprenticeship. Experience in domestic service would help prevent their entry into crime in adulthood enabling them to make a respectable living. Employers occupied in 'agricultural districts, drapers, grocers, and general tradesmen' were required to pay boys over the age of 14 years one shilling a week. However, boys 'taken out to service in colliery districts' received one shilling and six pence until the age of sixteen.<sup>107</sup> The lower salary may have been to encourage those in selected occupations to hire the cottage homes' servants, as boys resident with tradesmen and farmers had an increased opportunity to acquire a trade outside of domestic service in comparison to those engaged by coal miners. While the scheme may appear exploitative to modern minds, the placement of children in service was no different from the experiences of those who were put into service by their own families at a similar age. In many ways children from the Cottage Homes were at an advantage as their employers were vetted, their work and welfare was closely monitored (continued regulation was made compulsory under the 1851 Servants and Apprentices Act) and they had a place to return to if the position proved unsatisfactory. For instance the documents for the Cardiff Cottage Homes revealed how fifteen-year-old Emily Meade moved six times, each time returning to the home, before finally finding a permanent employer in 1915.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> F. E. Huggett, *Life Below Stairs: Domestic Servants in England from Victorian Times* (London: John Murray, 1977), p. 110.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid; Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service', p. 85.

<sup>106</sup> Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service', p. 79.

<sup>107</sup> GA: UPP/27, Pontypridd Cottage Homes Committee Minutes 20 December 1899.

<sup>108</sup> GA: UPP/73-101/75, Pontypridd Cottage Homes Register of Young Persons Hired as Servants.

In order to employ a child-servant a contract with the Cottage Home had to be signed. This set out the terms and responsibilities placed on the employers and gives an insight into the conditions of service experienced by the teenagers and public perceptions of the servants. It was the responsibility of the 'hirer' to 'feed, lodge, clothe, and educate the child' so that they are treated in 'every respect as his own child'. The language used suggests a conflict in the terms of agreement. In places it sounds more akin to an adoption with the reference to 'pocket money' as opposed to wages and the emphasis on parental responsibility for the young person, with employers even having to educate their servants. On the other hand the householder is referred to as a 'hirer' rather than a fosterer or adoptive parent. The scheme may have been introduced to find homes for older children that would otherwise have remained in social care but it also provided a source of cheap labour. However, only a minority of servants were recruited into the domestic service workforce through these public institutions. In total Pontypridd placed 194 children into service between 1913 and 1920 (100 boys and 94 girls) while Cardiff hired out 262 children between 1913 and 1921 (137 girls and 125 boys).

While, these organisations sought to help those in need and provide a reliable supply of servants, the direction of the pauper and criminal classes into the industry stigmatised the sector and reinforced the perception of servants as untrustworthy, low skilled and dishonest. As a result 'respectable' girls were either deterred from the sector or if engaged as servants it often added to their sense of injustice and discontent.<sup>109</sup> This was evident in the discussions surrounding reformatory servants published in the *Western Mail*. In response to a mistress's complaint that servants remained out too late in the evenings, an anonymous maid from Bridgend questioned 'how, if true, does she allow her servants to go out, or is it only one she keeps, and is that one from Tiger Bay? I should imagine that would be her style, and does she class them with respectable gentlemen's servant maids?'<sup>110</sup> The reference to Tiger Bay and the keeping of only one servant would indicate the writer blamed lower class girls for the negative stereotypes surrounding the industry. This is echoed in the testimony of another servant, who when told by an employer that 'servants were easily got at four a penny', responded 'I wonder what class of servants she could get for that price. I

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<sup>109</sup> Prochaska, 'Female Philanthropy and Domestic Service', p. 84.

<sup>110</sup> 'Disgusted, Bridgend', *Western Mail*, 9 December 1892.

expect by this time she would be glad to give a little more for one, if only to keep them a little longer'.<sup>111</sup> These extracts offer a rare glimpse into the way domestics viewed one another. Rather than simply class snobbery a sense of occupational protectionism appears to have played a key element in shaping servant attitudes. This is also perceivable among male servants, with one gardener lamenting the charge of drunkenness often directed at members of his 'profession';

We may, perhaps, have a greater number [of drunks] than other professions have, by reason of the facility there is for getting into ours; because any broken-down gentleman's servant, who has lost character and place through drink, can and often does pass himself off as a gardener on those who do not know the gardener proper.<sup>112</sup>

These accounts suggest that the lack of uniformity regarding entry standards, grade of worker and type of servant was a source of deep concern to many workers and caused considerable discontent. This was not merely class prejudice but the very real belief that the engagement of unskilled and inexperienced workers stigmatised all servants and prohibited the sector developing into the credible and respected profession. Similarly, some employers also attributed poor service to lower-status staff. One mistress wrote that 'I have had despicable characters to deal with, thieves, liars, etc, to say nothing of their dirty, filthy, wasteful habits; singularly, the poorer their bringing up and surroundings, the more wasteful'.<sup>113</sup> This is supported by the account of a Matron in arguing that bad servants 'as a rule, are rough, inexperienced girls, who come from poor and miserable homes'.<sup>114</sup> These accounts highlight the negative impact the entry of unskilled and lower-status women into service had on the perception of servants and the wider industry.

Philanthropic organisations did not just facilitate the entry of girls into the industry in south Wales but also assisted many of them in finding work overseas. Organised migration schemes aimed to encourage the safe movement of women out of Britain. Despite fears over a servant shortage in Britain there were several advantages to increasing the flow of women abroad. It firstly encouraged the colonisation of countries such as Canada and South Africa. The demand for women in the colonies was high and servants were rare. It has been estimated that there were

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<sup>111</sup> 'A Servant, Newport', *Western Mail*, 2 December 1892.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> 'A Victim, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 5 December 1892.

<sup>114</sup> 'A Country Matron, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 9 December 1892.



60 potential employers for every one maid and that the lack of domestics was a key reason for the reluctance of higher class, British women to migrate.<sup>115</sup> Organisations such as The Women's Emigration Society had been established in the mid-nineteenth century to promote the emigration of middle and upper-class women. It was hoped that this would not only increase their numbers overseas but would also provide a solution to the problem of 'surplus' women in Britain.<sup>116</sup> As one article argued:

To several, if not most of the colonies young women are carried free, and on their arrival in the colony employment is always awaiting them. There is plenty of reason why many young women who are now pining for husbands and comfort should find both by taking advantage of some of the means of emigration, under which they are protected as well as aided.<sup>117</sup>

If the estimates of their regional agents are to be believed then the scheme enjoyed a notable level of success with 8,000 British females having been transported to New South Wales alone between 1881 and 1884.<sup>118</sup> However, young women of all classes were sought to relocate abroad. Wales and Ireland were viewed as particularly good sources of potential migrants owing initially to the decline in agricultural positions during the nineteenth-century and the subsequent interwar depression.<sup>119</sup> The Salvation Army once again played a key role setting up a scheme that sought to find Welsh servants positions abroad. Advertisements featured in the local press read:

superior girls wanted at once for domestic service in Canada; to sail October 4<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup>; personally conducted to destination, and good situations guaranteed; best part of fares advanced to suitable applicants; lady Canadian representative here to advise- Call or write to Miss W. Leal, c/o Salvation Army Emigration Bureau, 5 Denmark Street, Bristol.<sup>120</sup>

No documents have been found to suggest how many girls took up the opportunity but total British figures are thought to have been low.<sup>121</sup> This was another aspect of the group's charitable efforts to ensure the safety and well-being of vulnerable domestics. The involvement of the Salvation Army may have reassured many young women of the legitimacy of the advert. It certainly attempted to reassure girls, describing how they would be 'personally conducted' to their place of work and that

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<sup>115</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, pp. 100-101.

<sup>116</sup> 'The Women's Emigration Society', *The Morning Post*, 26 December 1883.

<sup>117</sup> *The North Eastern Daily Gazette*, 10 September 1883.

<sup>118</sup> 'The Emigration of Women', *The Morning Post*, 5 July 1884.

<sup>119</sup> 'General News', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 16 November 1875: Williams, 'The New London Welsh', p. 143.

<sup>120</sup> Situations Vacant, *The Western Mail*, 15 September 1911.

<sup>121</sup> P. Hamilton, and B.W. Higman, 'Servants of Empire: The British Training of Domestics for Australia, 1926-31' in *Social History* 28 (2003) p. 77.

a 'lady Canadian representative' would be made available for consultation.<sup>122</sup> The reference to 'superior girls' indicates that the scheme was not aimed at the lowest grade of recruits such as those from workhouses and reform homes.

The Girls' Friendly Society [GFS] also assisted its members in migrating to the colonies. The organisation's annual reports reveal their role in locating jobs, protecting girls *en route*, providing accommodation on arrival and selecting suitable girls for free migration schemes established by colonial governments such as Australia.<sup>123</sup> However, the annual reports from the Emigration Department of the GFS for Llandaff suggest that take up was not high. In 1893 only three girls emigrated from the diocese.<sup>124</sup> One wished to migrate to a warmer climate for the winter and so temporarily relocated to Egypt, while the other two servants emigrated permanently to America, one of whom was accompanied by her family. In 1902, numbers were still relatively low with only two members having been recorded as having emigrated. One was conveyed to America where she was met by the organisation's American Associate, and the other, a lady's maid, had travelled privately with her mistress to Burma.<sup>125</sup> The relatively small number of women who emigrated, despite in some instances free passage and guaranteed work, may partly be attributed to the selectivity of the host countries. Australia was particularly discerning about the type of girls recruited into service posts with the Australian Board of Immigration closely monitoring the nature of the girls being admitted to the country.<sup>126</sup> For instance, the GFS associate in Adelaide reported to her colleagues in Britain that the settlement had 'no openings for companion helps in the colony', nor did they wish to receive any sickly servants as the climate was especially not 'beneficial in cases of consumption'.<sup>127</sup> Meanwhile, the correspondent in South Africa reported that Cape Colony possessed many 'openings for Nursery Governesses, Companion Helps, Matrons, and Working Housekeepers', while, 'it is a great happiness to add that the climate is so fine that there have been some cases of delicate health which, under the advice of an experienced physician, it has been possible to recommend for employment. These persons are all greatly improved in

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<sup>122</sup> Situations Vacant, *The Western Mail*, 15 November 1911.

<sup>123</sup> CCL: GFS Llandaff Annual Reports, 'Department for GFS Members Emigration', 1892, p. 69.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, 'Emigration Department-Llandaff', 1893, p. 19.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid 'Emigration', 1902, p. 23.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, 'Department for GFS Members Emigration', 1892, p. 69.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

health, and everyone is self-supporting'.<sup>128</sup> This suggests that the programmes did not just facilitate the migration of servants but also helped to shape it according to the demands of the different reception countries.

Such schemes were the forerunners of larger government run programmes introduced during the interwar era such as that established by the Australian government to coax British girls into its service sector.<sup>129</sup> However, only a minority of girls actually emigrated in the interwar era and it seems unlikely that more low-key schemes would have had a larger impact on the service workforce, in a period when domestic work was more plentiful, voyages were longer and no return tickets were offered. The existence of such schemes also served to heighten fears over a possible servant shortage in Wales. One article on the 'servant problem' that was featured in the *Western Mail* claimed that 'things go on drifting from bad to worse, and if the Canadian boom sets in it is hard to see what the British mistress will do...the few desirable servants make their way steadily across the ocean, there to settle down happily and to become in time the mistresses of other servants drawn in their turn from our distressful islands!'<sup>130</sup> This was a very optimistic assessment of the opportunities that awaited the migrants in their new countries and amidst a climate of fear over servant shortages, organised migration schemes for young women caused much public alarm.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, the charitable schemes had a significant impact on servant recruitment methods both in south Wales and further afield. They influenced the character of the workforce, the status of the industry and utilised the sector as a remedy for many social problems.

This study has demonstrated that recruitment had a significant impact on the domestic service industry in south Wales between 1871 and 1921. Trends associated with urbanisation and the expansion of the middle-classes such as development of leisure facilities, municipal governance, retail and suburbia heightened the demand for domestics. Despite a dramatic rise in the number of servants, supply remained lower than demand. The larger workforce led to the creation of more impersonal and often long distance recruitment methods. This marked a transition from young girls being reliant on familial and social contacts in securing positions to placing their

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid, p. 69.

<sup>129</sup> Hamilton and Higman, 'Servants of Empire', pp. 67-82.

<sup>130</sup> 'The Servant Problems', *The Western Mail*, 9 June 1900.

<sup>131</sup> Hamilton and Higman, 'Servants of Empire', p. 68.

trust in strangers. While fears had surrounded traditional forms of recruitment such as mop fairs, newer methods did little to alleviate the problems as they remained largely unregulated. The supply shortage and social concerns over the plight of destitute and friendless women also resulted in a number of organisations being established to direct those in need into the lower ranks of the service sector. This, however, contributed to the stigmatisation of the industry and reinforced the perception of servants as incompetent and immoral. Both the hazards that faced servants on entry into the industry and the stigma that surrounded servants resulted in the industry holding less appeal for young women. Although alternative forms of female employment were slow to emerge in south Wales, as the period progressed an increasing number of 'respectable' girls left the sector or chose to enter other occupations. Domestic service gradually became the domain of older dailies and low skilled 'maids of all work' as they had fewer alternative employment options. As a consequence of the unregulated means of recruitment and the changing demographic of workers industrial relations between servants and their employers became increasingly fraught.

#### IV

##### **Gender Ideology and the Domestic Service Industry in South Wales.**

Nineteenth-century bourgeois ideals of a male breadwinner and female homemaker had a significant impact on the position, opportunities and social perception of male and female servants.<sup>1</sup> Domestic service both reinforced and challenged these ideas. Despite the notion that women should refrain from entering the labour market, financial necessity made it impossible for many women to adhere to such an ideal. In reality approximately 25-30 percent of Welsh women worked outside their homes, most in service.<sup>2</sup> The domestic nature of the work made it one of the most socially acceptable forms of female employment and by the nineteenth century, the Welsh service workforce predominantly consisted of women. In contrast, their often 'light duties' and the requirement to 'live-in' with employers greatly challenged contemporary notions of masculinity.<sup>3</sup> Their tasks differed greatly from the manual work carried out by most working-class men, while their subservience failed to conform to the traits of authority and independence that characterised bourgeois concepts of patriarchy.

However, the industry had a far more ambiguous relationship with gender during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Accusations of effeminacy were countered by the skilled and outdoor nature of most male service positions in south Wales. Instead social concerns reflected middle-class anxiety about the habits of working men more generally. Drunkenness and promiscuity were amongst the most common accusations levelled at male domestics during the period. Yet, this did not deter the entry of men into the sector. Despite the belief that domestic service in Britain underwent a feminisation process as men were edged out of its workforce, the census results for Wales reveal a different trend. Between 1871 and 1911 the number of male servants increased dramatically suggesting that it continued to be seen as an attractive career option. Likewise, domestic service did not merely reinforce the connection between women and the home but facilitated their entry into the Welsh

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<sup>1</sup> D. Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation: The Welsh Experience 1847-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1990), p. 14.

<sup>3</sup> F. V. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: A True Portrait of Upstairs, Downstairs Life* (London: Century in Association with the National Trust, 1973), p. 64.

labour force. Some maids also had the chance to travel, acquire new skills and broaden their horizons. However, gains were limited as not all girls wanted or were able to take advantage of these opportunities. Progress was also restricted to the domestic service sector and many internal barriers in pay and occupations as well as gendered stereotypes continued.

In order to assess the nature of the relationship between domestic service and gender in south Wales, a number of key issues have been studied. Firstly, the chapter provides a statistical overview of the gender ratio of the workforce. It will be demonstrated that, while the majority of servants were female, there was no 'feminisation process' during the nineteenth century, as the number of male domestics continued to increase. The extent of the opportunities afforded to servants through their engagement in the sector is then undertaken. This includes an examination of occupational segregation, finance, education and migration. The impact of domestic service on the gender role of female servant-employers and middle-class philanthropists is also discussed. Finally, the chapter explores the stigma surrounding the service workforce and the impact domestic service had on contemporary notions of masculinity and femininity.

Since the 1970s the dominant gender ideology of the nineteenth century has frequently been characterised by the 'separate spheres' concept.<sup>4</sup> This portrayed a society split between the public male realm of 'government, politics and business' and the private female arena of the home.<sup>5</sup> This division was believed to adhere to the natural characteristics of each gender. Women were perceived as maternal and nurturing while men were better suited for the 'rough and tumble worlds of politics and commerce'.<sup>6</sup> This ideology was especially prevalent in the nineteenth century owing to a number of developments. Firstly, industrialisation is widely believed to have limited the economic activity of women. This was particularly significant in south Wales where women were largely excluded from the most dominant economic sector subsequent to the 1842 Mines and Collieries Act. Separate sphere ideology was also the result of religious doctrine that extolled the virtues of domesticated

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<sup>4</sup> S. Steinbach, 'Can We Still Use "Separate Spheres"? British History 25 Years After *Family Fortunes*', *History Compass* 10/11 (2012) p. 827.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 826.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

women.<sup>7</sup> Nonconformity has been identified as highly influential in the disseminating of such gender ideals and was particularly potent in south Wales in the aftermath of the 1847 Report into State and Education in Wales.<sup>8</sup> Beddoe has argued that in response to its attack on Welsh society and morality, many cultural and religious leaders adopted the doctrine of separate spheres 'with an outstanding fervour'.<sup>9</sup> Welsh women were portrayed as a 'civilising force within the home' and this in turn 'imposed on women in Wales a whole set of prescriptive rules'.<sup>10</sup> Purity and respectability was essential and the Chapel continued to police social behaviour up to the 1950s.

The development of the middle classes was the third factor ascribed with strengthening the 'institutional and ideological basis' of the separate sphere doctrine.<sup>11</sup> Davidoff and Hall's seminal study, *Family Fortunes*, demonstrated how class and gender impacted greatly on one another. It has become largely accepted by subsequent historians that 'separate spheres' was most likely to be realised in middle-class households.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the working class families could not usually afford to forgo female earnings, while neither male nor female members of the aristocracy worked for a living. The upper elite also wished to distance themselves from bourgeois notions.<sup>13</sup> Yet, despite the ideological supremacy of 'separate spheres', it failed to govern the reality of daily life. As a result domestic ideology has now been viewed as 'prescriptive' rather than 'descriptive'.<sup>14</sup> Steinbach has argued that the doctrine was not 'a rigid set of rules internalised as natural and adhered to unquestioningly' but rather a 'developing notion...rife with internal contradictions, and frequently challenged'.<sup>15</sup> It will be demonstrated that domestic service both reinforced and challenged those gender ideals in a number of ways.

Discourse on the relationship between gender and domestic service has centred on two issues; the feminisation of the workforce and the impact on gender

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<sup>7</sup> S. Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place: Public Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007) p. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid; Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p. 179.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 180.

<sup>11</sup> Morgan, *A Victorian Woman's Place*, p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Steinbach, 'Can We Still Use "Separate Spheres"?' , p. 827.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, p. 826.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, p. 830.

stereotypes. The notion of feminisation centred on the belief that ‘by the end of the nineteenth century, only the very wealthy retained their male staff’ as ‘the replacement of men by women’ became commonplace.<sup>16</sup> While there has been a consensus that the proportion of women in the sector increased, a degree of ambiguity has surrounded the speed and cause of the development. McBride has argued that urbanisation and industrialisation facilitated the movement of men out of service as other economic opportunities presented themselves. Women, meanwhile, were compelled to remain in service due to ‘restrictive social values’ and the ‘lack of training’ available to women.<sup>17</sup> This is supported by Frank Huggett in portraying women as ‘late comers’ to the industry, whose entry into the sector was the result of industrialisation diverting male labour.<sup>18</sup> In contrast, Leonard Schwarz has attributed the decline in the proportion of male servants to the 1777 levy on male domestic employees.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, Bridget Hill has also pinpointed the introduction of the tax as a key disincentive for the recruitment of male domestics.<sup>20</sup> However, she has also argued that lifestyle changes, especially amongst the middle-class populace during the eighteenth century, heightened demand for unspecialised servants and thus females. Yet, while the eighteenth century may have opened the floodgates for women to enter the sector *en masse*, feminisation was said to have only been consolidated during the Victorian era when the limited financial resources of the bourgeoisie restricted the employment of male domestic servants.<sup>21</sup> Huggett writes that ‘the great age of the male servant had passed by the time Queen Victoria came to the throne... higher wages, taxes, and expenses all combined to reduce the number of male servants’.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, despite debates surrounding the speed and causes of feminisation the literature is unanimous in portraying service as the increasing preserve of females.

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<sup>16</sup> M. Higgs, *Tracing Your Servant Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2012), p. 9.

<sup>17</sup> T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820- 1920* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> F. E. Huggett, *Life Below Stairs: Domestic Servants in England from Victorian Times* (London: John Murray, 1977), p. 7.

<sup>19</sup> L. Schwarz, ‘English Servants and their Employers during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries’, *The Economic History Review* 52 (1999) p. 249.

<sup>20</sup> B. Hill, *Servants: English Domestics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 38.

<sup>21</sup> Huggett, *Life Below Stairs*, pp. 11 and 23.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, p. 23.



The second issue examined is the impact of domestic service on gender roles. Domestic service has frequently been attributed with prolonging the association between femininity and domesticity. Rosemary Scadden's feminist critique of Welsh women's experiences in service during the interwar years has argued that they were rendered 'invisible and powerless', essentially 'a large pool of talent that was allowed to stagnate'.<sup>23</sup> Others have emphasised the subjugating role of service through portraying a largely negative image of the sector and emphasising the reluctance of some girls to enter it.<sup>24</sup> Historians have tended to view the benefits of becoming a servant largely in terms of 'housewifely skills'.<sup>25</sup> This reflects the connections contemporaries made between service and matrimony. However, there has also been a degree of recognition that domestic service could be as 'liberating' as it was 'oppressive'.<sup>26</sup> This is particularly evident in E.N. Glenn's twentieth-century based study of Japanese-American housewives. It proposes that service formed a 'compromise resolution' that enabled the women to earn money without challenging their social and cultural role as a mother and wife.<sup>27</sup> The study demonstrates that the industry had a far more complicated relationship with gender ideology than simply reinforcing separate sphere ideology.

This chapter is reliant on a wide range of fragmented qualitative sources. The earning potential of staff, their visibility and the broadening of their horizons as well as the operation of informal occupational barriers will be explored using a variety of archival documents and personal accounts. These include the organisational documents of the Girls Friendly Society, the Training School for Domestic Arts for South Wales and Monmouthshire, and the Glyn Neath Domestic Science Centre. The character and influence of servant stigma and its relationship to gender stereotypes will also be explored through a range of published accounts including newspaper articles and popular novels. The work of Allen Raine has proved particularly useful in revealing the portrayal of Welsh servants (of both genders) in popular culture. Therefore, a variety of primary material has been consulted to uncover the gendered

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<sup>23</sup> R. Scadden, *'Be good sweet maid, and let who will be clever': A Study of Welsh Girls in Domestic Service during the Interwar Period*, (Swansea University: PhD Thesis, 1996), pp. 1 and 3.

<sup>24</sup> G. Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 181-184.

<sup>25</sup> J. Gardiner, *Manor House: Life in an Edwardian Country House* (California: Bay Books, 2002), p. 123.

<sup>26</sup> E. N. Glenn, 'The Dialects of Wage Work: Japanese-American Women and Domestic Service, 1906-1940' in *Feminist Studies* 6 (1980) p. 467.

<sup>27</sup> Glenn, 'The Dialects of Wage Work', p. 450.

nature of the workforce and the way in which domestic service challenged traditional gender doctrine.

Personal testimony is available in the form of interviews provided to the 'Women's Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley Study' between 1974 and 1983. During this period oral history was beginning to emerge as a credible historical source and was increasing in prominence as a theoretical approach for twentieth-century history.<sup>28</sup> Many of the early oral history practitioners were strongly influenced by the new social, labour and feminist history movements.<sup>29</sup> This can be seen in the nature of the Swansea Valley project, which centred on working women's lives and omitted the testimony of men and middle-class females. The accounts of the retired maids also focused largely on work routines, leisure pursuits and class relations, greatly reflecting the interests of the interviewer. However, the underlying aims of oral history stretched beyond providing 'a voice to the voiceless, a narrative to the story-less and power to the marginalised'.<sup>30</sup> It also intended to make sense of the changing role of women in the 1970s and 1980s, a period in which feminism underwent something of a resurgence.<sup>31</sup> It saw the establishment of organisations such as the Women's Liberation Movement and the Women for Life on Earth group, as well as the introduction of legislation such as the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975). Oral history was part of both a move away from conventional scholarship and patriarchal social structures. As a result the voices of the women interviewed were 'not neutral narratives offering a "pure" vision of the past but were elements in a political project of resistance' and ultimately change.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the structure of the interviews conducted as part of the Swansea Valley audio project were highly influenced by the intellectual climate of the era.

During the nineteenth century domestic service was already a feminised sector with women vastly outnumbering men. Between 1871 and 1921 male servants accounted for an average of 9.4 percent of domestics in Wales.<sup>33</sup> However, it would

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<sup>28</sup> L. Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010) p. 4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.155.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 154.

<sup>31</sup> Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows*, p. 159.

<sup>32</sup> Abrams, *Oral History Theory*, p. 156.

<sup>33</sup> J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, Vol. 1. (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press, 1985), p. 96.

be inaccurate to claim that the sector underwent a 'feminisation process' during the nineteenth century, as this term implies that men were progressively being marginalised as the number of female staff continued to increase.<sup>34</sup> However, in England and Wales the actual number of men in the industry increased from 37,000 in 1871 to 75,000 in 1901.<sup>35</sup> This has been attributed to the growth of suburbia and the development of municipal parks that stimulated a demand for the largest male servant group; the gardeners.<sup>36</sup> The number of male domestics in the British industry did not begin to decline until after 1901, when changing census occupational categories and the introduction of chauffeurs had a detrimental impact on the number of male servants recorded.<sup>37</sup> Chauffeurs were thought particularly corrosive to the demand for male workers as one chauffeur absorbed the work of three men in positions such as grooms, coachmen and stable boys.<sup>38</sup> While British figures began to decline from 1901, in Wales the number of men in the sector increased up to 1911, more than doubling from 6,133 to 14,792 since 1871 (as displayed in Table IV.I.). The difference in the level of male participation in the sector can best be seen in the results of the 1881 census. While in Wales men formed a minority of 1 for every 10 female servants, in England they were in a minority of 1 for every 22.<sup>39</sup> The continued popularity of domestic service with male workers in Wales is also visible at county level where the number of men engaged in the sector in Carmarthenshire doubled from 377 to 823, while in Glamorgan the number more than quadrupled from 899 to 4271.<sup>40</sup> The Welsh results contrast greatly with those of England where men comprised a smaller proportion of the service workforce in industrial areas than elsewhere in the country owing to the availability of positions in heavy industry.<sup>41</sup> However, Glamorgan had a particularly large number of industrial posts, yet, the number of men in domestic service continued to grow. This indicates that domestic service provided an appealing alternative occupation for men and that their numbers were not purely determined by the availability of industrial jobs.

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<sup>34</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p.19.

<sup>35</sup> P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975), p. 84.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>38</sup> M. Ebery, and B. Preston, *Geographical Papers: Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England, 1871-1914* (Reading: University of Reading, 1976), p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 84.

<sup>40</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, pp. 110 and 113.

<sup>41</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 38.

Table IV.I. Male servants as a proportion of the domestic service workforce in Wales, Glamorgan and Carmarthenshire.

Year	Number of Male Servants			Male Servants as Proportion of Domestic Service Industry (%)		
	Wales	Glamorgan	Carmarthenshire	Wales	Glamorgan	Carmarthenshire
1871	6,133	899	377	6.8	4.4	5.4
1881	10,240	2,140	553	10.4	8.2	7.8
1891	4,848	1,330	329	4.4	4	4
1901	11,459	2,856	654	11.4	8.9	8.5
1911	14,792	4,271	823	14	11.4	11.7
1921	8,024	3,560	330	9.3	10.6	6.8

Source: Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, pp. 96, 110 and 113.

To gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing the Welsh gender ratio a more localised study is required. An analysis of the domestic workforce composition of Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen provides a more detailed indication of the factors that shaped the gender balance of the sector. Figure IV.I. demonstrates the degree of variation in the level of male employment between the three settlements. Aberdare was the only town where the proportion of male servants in the sample continuously declined between 1871 and 1911. In both Carmarthen and Bridgend there was an increase in the percentage of men in the sector, by 9.4 percent and 9.6 percent respectively.<sup>42</sup> The lower number of male servants in Aberdare did not reflect the higher number of men (52 percent of population were men) than women in the town. In contrast both Bridgend (49.6 percent) and Carmarthen (46.2 percent) had a higher ratio of women in their population yet a larger proportion of men in their domestic service sector.<sup>43</sup> As an area dominated by the coal industry, Aberdare was unlikely to attract male migrants in search of specifically domestic posts, while the nature of the town's economy also curtailed the supply of workers. In contrast, Bridgend had a large number of male servants. Unlike Aberdare or the more insular workforce in Carmarthen, Bridgend attracted a high level of male migrants and had no dominant heavy industry to absorb them. Despite its closeness to the coalfield, the town's more mixed economy provided a wider range of employment opportunities including service. As a result of its economic character

<sup>42</sup> *The Census for England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>43</sup> *The Census for England and Wales, Census Report and Tables*, 1911, p. 13.

and its geographical location, a considerable proportion of the migrants to the town originated from agricultural families in the south-westerly rural counties of England and Wales. Agricultural backgrounds were thought to have been the best sources for outdoor male staff as they were perceived to be more honest and hard-working.<sup>44</sup> Their rural backgrounds would, however, have also provided them with the experience and skills necessary to work as an outdoor servant. The role of Carmarthen and Bridgend as administrative centres for their districts indicates the presence of middle-class and more affluent households that would require the services of labourers such as gardeners. Therefore, it would appear that rather than perceiving the level of feminisation as dependent on a country's stage of industrialisation as argued by McBride, the proportion of male servants in Wales was dependent on a variety of complex socio-economic factors that experienced considerable regional variation.<sup>45</sup>

Figure IV.I. The number of male servants in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen.



Source: Census of England and Wales, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

The number of male servants in Wales continued to increase up to the outbreak of the First World War. However, even in the aftermath of the conflict, a widely acknowledged catalyst for the reduction in male employment in the sector, they did not return to their mid-nineteenth century low. However, the proportion of

<sup>44</sup> J. J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1956), p. 51.

<sup>45</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 14.

male domestics in Wales reduced by 45.8 percent between 1911 and 1921, whereas female servants declined by just 13.3 percent. Yet, this reveals that the war did not entirely eradicate men from the industry although their numbers were significantly depleted. The interwar economic depression and the capacity of service to facilitate the entry of veterans back into the civilian labour force were important contributory factors to the enduring presence of men in the industry.<sup>46</sup> Although it is unknown how many ex-service men were engaged in the industry in 1921, the government at least felt it a credible option. This is demonstrated by the introduction of insurance equality measures for disabled veterans in receipt of a Home Office pension.<sup>47</sup> The legislation meant that employers paid lower insurance premiums for disabled veterans in their employ than they would for a servant with a non-combat related health issue. This removed some of the financial disincentives to the recruitment of returning soldiers. The older age demographic of male servants in comparison to their female counterparts may also have contributed to buoyancy of male occupations as many workers had been too old for active duty. Therefore, rather than viewing male dominated positions as an increasingly marginalised section of the industry, they repeatedly proved to be incredibly robust despite the reclassification of some male occupations outside the sector as the period progressed. Yet, neither changing social demands, the growth of heavy industry, taxation, nor the First World War was able to bring about their complete eradication.

Nineteenth-century gender ideology had a significant impact on the nature of the domestic service industry with informal internal occupational barriers operating well into the twentieth century. The role each individual worker assumed was heavily influenced by their gender. While women generally worked indoors and in predominantly low-status positions, their male colleagues were largely based outdoors in skilled roles. As the nineteenth century progressed male indoor servants became the preserve of wealthy householders, and outdoor workers, were increasingly recruited by multiple private employers or local government. Meanwhile the decline in the number of indoor male servants was the result of high wages, taxation, warfare, their often disreputable reputation and the splintering of

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<sup>46</sup> P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth-Century* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001), p. 29; J. Flanders, *The Victorian House* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), p.xxi; L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p. 154.

<sup>47</sup> WGAS: D/D CV 4/655/1-2, Servant Insurance Policy, 16 October 1920.

occupations from the 'umbrella' of domestic service.<sup>48</sup> As numbers dwindled and middle-class demand rose, their duties were increasingly undertaken by housemaids, 'maids of all work' and other female domestics. However outdoor tasks continued to be regarded as unsuitable for women. This was demonstrated in the outrage provoked when one correspondent to the *Western Mail* admitted that as a general servant she would often cut her employer's lawn.<sup>49</sup> Much of the discontent was seemingly founded on the belief that such chores were detrimental to female health. Yet, in reality cutting the grass was no more strenuous than some of the activities servants performed indoors, such as carrying water upstairs for baths, blackening grates, scrubbing floors and even washing the laundry. This suggests that it was the outdoor nature of the work that caused greatest alarm. While society was often willing to ignore the engagement of women in traditionally male tasks behind closed doors, such as polishing silver and waiting at table, the undertaking of male duties in full sight of the suburban neighbours was a very visible breach of gender roles and could not be so easily overlooked. Even in 1911, only three women were engaged as domestic gardeners in Glamorgan while five were occupied in 'domestic outdoor service' in Carmarthenshire.<sup>50</sup> Although gender barriers were being eroded in private, such transgressions could not be tolerated in public. This was another factor that led to the continued expansion in the number of outdoor male servants while their indoor counterparts declined. Therefore, an examination of the gendered nature of service positions has revealed a tension between the restriction of women to the indoor sphere and the blurring of their roles therein.

Tensions also surrounded the earning potential of women and its broader impact on their lives. On the one hand domestic service provided an independent income, yet the industry's pay structure also reinforced gender inequality. As men often held senior positions they generally received a higher rate of pay. Even for roles of a similar status male wages were usually higher than those of their female counterparts. Although domestic service enabled women to earn their own money, few received any long-term financial benefit. This was predominantly the result of the short duration of their time in service, low wages and additional outgoings. As a

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<sup>48</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 38; L. Schwarz, 'English Servants and their Employers during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries' in *The Economic History Review* 52 (1999) p. 249.

<sup>49</sup> 'Four Young Beginners', *Western Mail* 14 December 1892.

<sup>50</sup> *Census England and Wales*, Table of occupations for males and females aged ten and over, Carmarthenshire and Glamorganshire, 1911.

result many servants were unable to save and were forced to rely on charity or the state when unemployed, sick or elderly. The census enumerators' books for Bridgend reveal that retired servants were common residents at the Union Street Workhouse. Of the 104 'inmates', in 1871, nineteen were registered as having been domestics.<sup>51</sup> Twelve of them were female farm servants ranging in age between 20 and 78 years. A 50 year old gardener, a 77 year old groom, and a 45 year old cook were also listed alongside a group of elderly general maids.<sup>52</sup>

Other servants continued to work in the sector well into their 70s and 80s.<sup>53</sup> In Wind Street, Aberdare in 1911, 74 year old Lucy Richards was employed as a daily general servant, while in 1871, at Dunraven Place, Bridgend, 88 year old Mary Thomas also continued to work on a daily basis as a 'maid of all work'.<sup>54</sup> These positions could be physically demanding for younger women and so was an even greater challenge for someone of their advanced age. The census returns for Tredegar House also indicates that servants were compelled or desired to remain in employment well into their later years. In 1911, several members of the household staff including the butler, housekeeper and several housemaids were over 60 years old.<sup>55</sup> On other large estates, employers provided cottages and small pensions to long-serving employees, although such provision was scarce in more modest households.<sup>56</sup> As a result a very basic state pension of 5 shillings a week was introduced in 1908 for those over 70 with less than £21 p.a. to live on.<sup>57</sup> Although this was intended to provide the lowest level of security to encourage people to remain in employment, it also led to a decline in the number of servants aged 70 or above working in the industry.<sup>58</sup> This is visible in the case study census results for Aberdare and Bridgend where the proportion of servants over 60 fell 3.6 to 2 percent and 4.8 to 1.3 percent respectively between 1871 and 1911. However, Carmarthen experienced an increase, from 5.5 percent of servants being over 60 to 8.2 percent, reflecting the older age demographic of the town as young workers migrated to neighbouring urban areas. Prior to 1908 domestics were reliant on parish poor relief,

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<sup>51</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Bridgend Workhouse, 1871.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Bridgend, 1911.

<sup>54</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare and Bridgend, 1871 and 1911.

<sup>55</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Tredegar House, Newport, 1871 and 1911.

<sup>56</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 163.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*; Ebery, and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 33.



private contributory pension schemes operated by trade societies, or in the worst cases, the workhouse.<sup>59</sup> These formed the only source of assistance for many servants during illness or injury. This highlights the precarious financial position of domestics regardless of gender, age and occupation.

The practice of sending money home was a common drain on the income of servants throughout south Wales and an important factor in the failure of many servants to amass savings. The correspondence of fifteen year old, ex-resident, Catherine Collins to the Matron of the Cardiff Cottage Homes revealed how she regularly sent 6s 5d out of her wages to her grandparents.<sup>60</sup> This demonstrates how even young Cottage Homes servants were frequently expected to support their relatives. The oral testimony of retired maid Mrs Landon from Brynamman also revealed that of the £2 a month earned, 10s were sent home to her parents.<sup>61</sup> Likewise, overseas servants supported relatives back home and occasionally funded the emigration of other family members.<sup>62</sup> The servants wage book of Carmarthenshire farmer, Benjamin Thomas, kept in varying detail between 1881 and 1916 also displayed how servants often sent their wages home.<sup>63</sup> Rather than giving regular pay, he retained the money until the servants asked for a sum. His book lists the cash requested and the reason stated. For example, one servant Margaret Bowen regularly sent a portion of her £10 salary to her father. The amounts varied from 10s on the 23 January 1889 to £3 on the 10 January 1891. The practice of sending wages to relatives held the potential to foster the notion of women as providers. However their role was widely perceived as an extension of their traditional familial duties.<sup>64</sup> This enabled these servants to be incorporated into the prevailing gender ideology without posing too much of a challenge.<sup>65</sup>

The establishment of the 'Bute Dowry' in Cardiff also indicates a public recognition of the inability of most servants to establish any degree of financial security during their working careers. The dowry consisted of a year's interest on a

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<sup>59</sup> Ebery and Preston, *Domestic Service in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 33; Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 161.

<sup>60</sup> GA: SD/50/11/2, *Correspondence attached to the Cardiff Cottage Homes Register*.

<sup>61</sup> SWML: AUD/399, 'Women's' Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley', Audio Recordings.

<sup>62</sup> CCL, GFS Llandaff Diocese Annual Reports, 'Department for GFS Members Emigration' (1892), p. 68.

<sup>63</sup> CRO: DB/ 41/15, *Benjamin Thomas Servants Wage Book*.

<sup>64</sup> E. Roberts, *Women's Work 1840- 1940* (Cambridge: University Press, 1988), p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Glenn, 'The Dialects of Wage Work', p. 442.

thousand pounds, a sum that amounted to approximately £30. The fund was established in 1898 and aimed to give young, working-class girls the required capital to start married life. Helena MacDonald, the employer of the 1913 recipient, Bessie Cole, wrote when nominating her loyal servant for the award, that Bessie's husband was a hard working man but his 'wages will be very little to keep house, therefore I am anxious for her to get such a nice nest-egg to begin with'.<sup>66</sup> From tracing the names of the recipients and their intended spouses in the census enumerator books, it is clear that in nearly all instances the brides resided either with parents or employers while their future husbands also lived with family or in lodgings. Therefore the 'nest-egg' was very much needed to set up home as was the additional prize of £7.7.0 worth of household furniture from the Roath Furnishing Company.<sup>67</sup> The prize was always awarded in the Mayor's parlour at Cardiff Town Hall just after the wedding ceremony. It was conducted in the presence of the mayor, the bridal party, the town clerk, various councillors and press representatives.<sup>68</sup> In order to receive the dowry, the marriage certificate first had to be provided for inspection by the town clerk, a document of receipt was signed by the relevant parties and the first eleven verses of the second chapter of St John's Gospel was read. The inscribed Bible was then presented to the bride along with the dowry.<sup>69</sup> The servant as an individual rather than as a couple, applied for and received the money. This was reinforced in the newspaper account of an 'amusing error' in 1914, where the bridegroom, gas worker James Iles, 'promptly pocketed' the dowry. This led to the town clerk whispering to the groom 'that the dowry was a gift to the bride and amid considerable laughter the purse of gold was returned to the Lord Mayor, who then handed it to the bride'.<sup>70</sup> This reinforced the idea that the maids were the intended recipients of the dowry and confirmed the notion that many girls left their positions with only limited financial funds.

However, the dowry was also a very public way of encouraging girls to enter the industry and to remain therein. The prizes were normally awarded to long-serving domestics, especially those that had served one employer for a lengthy duration.<sup>71</sup> In

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<sup>66</sup> GA: D/DX401/1, Letter from Helena MacDonalds to the Lord Mayor, Bessie Cole Collection.

<sup>67</sup> GA: D/DX401/25, Letter from Roath Furnishing Company to Bessie Cole, Bessie Cole Collection.

<sup>68</sup> 'Lord Bute's Dowry to Poor Girls', *Western Mail*, 22 April 1898.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> 'Bridegroom and Bute Dowry', *Western Mail*, 13 April 1914.

<sup>71</sup> Mr, Talbot, M.P. and the Bridgend Labourers' Friend Society', *Western Mail*, 16 November 1878.

1902, 28 year old cook, Elizabeth Allen was reportedly selected owing to the 'very good character he [the mayor] received of her, and he was especially pleased that the character was borne out by the fact that she had retained her situation for eleven years.'<sup>72</sup> Another servant, Bessie Triggs, was awarded the dowry after fifteen years of unbroken service 'at the Howard Gardens Secondary School and during that time she has only been absent on one occasion, when she buried her mother eleven years ago'.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Bessie Cole's employer, Helena MacDonald also stated the maid's ten year continuous service as a reason why she should be considered a worthy applicant.<sup>74</sup> It should also be noted that the receipt of the dowry cannot entirely be viewed as evidence of the limited capacity of servants to save their earnings. The award was an honour and there is no indication that there was any necessitation on the recipient to disclose their financial situation when applying for it. Indeed, many of the recipients were based in fairly affluent residences where wages were likely to have been higher than those in working-class households. For instance, Elizabeth Allen was one of four servants employed by the Roath based J.P. and ship owner, Phillip Turnbull, while the 1905 recipient, 23 year old kitchen maid Caroline Virgin, was one of two servants working for Durham-born ship broker, Thomas Campbell.<sup>75</sup> Yet, its very creation suggests that maids were thought seldom able to accrue significant savings before marriage.

Organisations such as the Metropolitan Association for Befriending Young Servants [MABYS] and the Girls' Friendly Society [GFS] were instrumental in encouraging young servants to save in order to create a financial safety-net.<sup>76</sup> However, details of their impact are scarce. In the 1880s the MABYS had a nationwide network of programmes for young servants. It included 25 branch registries, 17 homes and over 800 female home visitors who vetted potential employers. It was estimated that in total 5,000 girls a year received assistance from the association.<sup>77</sup> Meanwhile, the GFS had 700 branches, 92,000 members and

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<sup>72</sup> 'Bute Marriage Dowry', *Western Mail*, 21 April 1902.

<sup>73</sup> 'Bridegroom and Bute Dowry.' *Western Mail*, 13 April 1914.

<sup>74</sup> GA: D/DX401/1, Correspondence from Helena MacDonald to Cardiff Mayor.

<sup>75</sup> CL: LC: 392.5 BUT, The Third Marquis of Bute's Silver Wedding Dowry Fund, Origins of the Dowry and List of Recipients, 1898-1989.

<sup>76</sup> CCL: 'Thrift Leaflets' series GFS discovered amongst the Llandaff Diocese Annual Reports, 1883-1902.

<sup>77</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, p. 91.

23,000 lady-associates in 1883 according to the Llandaff Diocese Annual Report.<sup>78</sup> By 1891, branches were recorded in Aberdare, Abergavenny, Canton, Cowbridge, Llandaff, Llantrisant, Monmouth, Neath, Newport, Penarth and Roath to name but a few. By the Edwardian era the organisation was reputed to have gained quarter of a million members in Britain.<sup>79</sup> It is believed that by 1900 at least 1,000 charities had been created, of which approximately 600 were associated with female welfare.<sup>80</sup>

The need for servants to be informed, encouraged and educated in prudence and personal finance is evident in the GFS' publication of a series of 'Thrift Leaflets' in 1896. They included 'Earning', 'What is Thrift?', 'A Rainy Day' and 'How to be Thrifty'. The texts extolled the virtues of retaining their money and gave practical advice to servants on earning, spending and saving. Being thrifty was said to give women greater 'power, and opportunity, and money and time'.<sup>81</sup> The pamphlet argued that 'even out of a very modest wage (and many girls in service receive more than that) can nothing be set aside for a time of need? The plain answer is that something *can* be regularly saved'. The correspondence of Catherine Collins to her old Cottage Homes matron appears to support their assertion, as she told of how she was able to deposit 9s 5d into her bank account every month.<sup>82</sup> Her letter also indicates that bank accounts were not the preserve of the higher status domestics but were used by those at the lower end of the scale as well.

The GFS suggested a number of saving methods to their members such as penny banks, Post Office accounts, government stock, life or endowment insurance and deferred annuities.<sup>83</sup> The use of benefit societies, such as 'The Provident Dispensary' (established 1876) in Picton Place Swansea, was also advocated.<sup>84</sup> The Dispensary provided 'medical advice and medicine for the working-classes, domestic servants and other persons who are unable to pay the professional fees'.<sup>85</sup> While schemes such as benefit societies had some degree of popularity (by 1901 the

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<sup>78</sup> CCL: Girls Friendly Society, Llandaff Diocese Annual Reports,

<sup>79</sup> Gardiner, *Manor House*, p. 272.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>81</sup> CCL: 'Thrift leaflets' series No. 1 'What is Thrift?' GFS discovered amongst the Llandaff Diocese Annual Reports, 1883-1902, p. 1.

<sup>82</sup> GA: *Correspondence attached to the register of children hired or taken as servants, Cardiff*.

<sup>83</sup> CCL: 'Thrift Leaflets' series no 2 'How to be Thrifty', GFS, pp. 2-7.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> *Kelly's Trade Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales* (London: Kelly's Directorie Ltd, 1901), p. 735.

Provident Dispensary had approximately 1,800 members in the Swansea area alone), they were long-term commitments and given the often short duration of service it is unlikely that they were especially popular. While the GFS intended to assist young girls, realistically activities such as the purchasing of government stock would only have been possible for long-term career servants. Older women with substantial savings were the only servants, capable of purchasing government stock as a large sum was needed to make the enterprise worthwhile. The short average life expectancy may also have deterred many girls from paying into an endowment policy or pension which paid out at the age of 60 or older.

Attempts were also made at the Free Registry and Training Home for Young Servants in Cardiff, to encourage ex-residents to save their wages.<sup>86</sup> On Thursday evenings a 'Bank' was opened at the home for girls to deposit their money. As an incentive one penny was added to 'every shilling and 2/6 to every sovereign found in the Bank at the end of the year'.<sup>87</sup> Even the provision of uniforms on entering their first post was used as an opportunity to train the girls in money management. A pamphlet produced by the home explains:

If the girl is so destitute that she absolutely requires a few new garments, her name is put on the Clothing Club and these (ready made by the Associates) are supplied to her at the cost of the materials. She pays for these out of her first month's wages (mistress and servant signing an agreement to that effect), and the remainder of her outfit is supplied month by month in the same way. A bonus 8d a month and 1/6 a quarter is given to all those girls who bring their whole monthly wages to the Matron. The object of this is to teach them how to lay out their money to the best advantage.<sup>88</sup>

Such schemes provided a way for philanthropists to disseminate middle-class values of thrift and prudence amongst the girls in their care. Yet, their introduction also suggests recognition of the need to educate women in how to manage their money and not just in the everyday skills of the domestic servant. This had a practical purpose as servants that were able to accrue savings had a safety net in times of hardship and were less likely to become destitute or require state and charitable assistance in the future.

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<sup>86</sup> CCL: 948.2(536) LAD, The Free Registry and Training Home for Young Servants in Cardiff was run by the Ladies Association for the Care of Friendless Girls. 1885.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

As well as charities, employers could also be instrumental in nurturing thrift amongst their domestic staff. This is evident in the cash book of Carmarthenshire farmer, Benjamin Thomas.<sup>89</sup> Through retaining their pay until it was requested he was able to monitor their outgoings and even provided loans when needed. In 1881, farm servant, Sarah Adams spent 2s on velvet trim, 5s on a new hat as well as some other unaccounted for expenses amounting to £1 11s 6d above her annual salary of £4 10s. This he deducted from her following years wages. In contrast, her co-worker Richard Morris only spent £7 19s 1d of his £11 5s salary and so received a lump sum of £3 5s 11d at the end of the year.<sup>90</sup> His purchases included a new box, seven yards of flannel, tailoring costs and a visit to Llanboidy show. Two years later, Benjamin engaged sixteen year old Thomas Edwards, paying him £9 10s a year. His outgoings amounted to £8 9s 6d and included trips to the local town and to a wedding, subscription to the local Bible society and a new pair of boots.<sup>91</sup> However, this document reveals that some servants failed to save, not just because of the need to support relatives or because of low wages, but because they simply spent their income on consumer goods and leisure activities.

In contrast, for high-status career servants who resided with their employers, service could provide a good opportunity to accumulate money as their outgoings were minimal.<sup>92</sup> A housekeeper at Erddig Hall, near Wrexham, was a notable example of the potential for servants to amass substantial savings. By the time of her death in the mid-nineteenth century Mary Webster had amassed a legacy of £1300. Her thriftiness was the result of her fear of entering the workhouse in sickness or old age.<sup>93</sup> Her case was exceptional and only possible as Mary was a high ranking servant employed in a stately home and so received higher wages than most domestics. However, even for some lower status workers a more modest amount could be accrued as revealed by the number of domestics in possession of bank accounts. The Swansea Savings Bank, for instance, in 1848 listed 387 servants with accounts, of which 72 were menservants, 49 nurses and charwomen and the

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<sup>89</sup> CRO: *Servants Wage Book*.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 98.

<sup>93</sup> M. Waterson, *The Servants' Hall: A Domestic History of Erddig* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980), p. 80.

remainder were unspecified female domestics.<sup>94</sup> The average savings for the female servants was just over £30, male servants averaged £43 and nurses and charwomen had a fraction over £48.<sup>95</sup> The higher savings of charwomen possibly reflected their more advanced years and heightened fear of destitution in the event of ill health or dismissal. Almost 400 servants in one bank was not an insignificant number and it may be suggested that as the nineteenth century progressed, the number of servants rose and the banking system expanded, an increasing number of domestics would have opened accounts. Therefore, depending on the personal circumstances, occupation and individual character, domestic service did provide an opportunity to establish a small nest egg. It was also an important vehicle through which middle-class employers and philanthropists could inculcate in young working-class girls, and some boys, the bourgeois values of thrift, frugality and prudence. Although domestic service did not improve the long-term financial predicament of all servants, it did afford a rare opportunity for women to earn their own money and manage their own finances. Despite the continuation of gender inequalities in the pay scale, the industry provided options, however limited. For those that wished to avoid destitution, the workhouse or even marriage domestic service proved an important source of income. Essentially, the sector provided short-term financial benefit to many and the opportunity for long-term economic security to a few.

Dominant nineteenth-century gender ideology also impacted on the educational opportunities afforded by domestic service. The engagement of women in the industry increasingly promoted the provision of female training and education. Vocational training was viewed as a potential method of improving the status of servants and subsequently attracting more girls into its workforce. It was claimed that:

if domestic service were made a regular calling requiring training as exact as that of the hospital nurse, and girls educated to regard the polishing of a grate or dusting of a room or cleaning of a saucepan as interesting as typewriting or telegraphy....we should be some way towards solving a problem that is of more import to the majority of us than female suffrage, or the rights of university ladies, or the ethics of vivisection.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> J. Ginswick, (ed.) *Labour and the Poor in England and Wales, 1849- 1851*, Volume III (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd., 1983), p. 180.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> 'Wanted: Schools of Housewifery', *Western Mail*, 20 March 1897.

Consequently, a number of domestic science centres were established in the hope of improving the quality and supply of servants. One such institution was the Glyn Neath Domestic Science Centre. It was used by pupils from local schools, including 'Glyn Neath, Glyn Neath Higher, Blaengwrach and Glyn Neath Girls'.<sup>97</sup> The head teacher's log book for 1916 shows five classes each with between 13 and 18 pupils.

Their lessons included:

sweeping; dusting; polishes; furniture pastes; mirrors and pictures; stoves; hair brushes and nails; floor coverings; lighting; cleaning of lamps; carpets and linoleum; cleaning of metals; cleaning of cutlery; treatment of leather; care of clothing; bread; puddings; pastry making; invalids lunch; economy in the kitchen; infant feeding; treatment of body linen; bran washing; medicine chests; cleaning of boots; and laying tables for supper'.<sup>98</sup>

This demonstrates the wide range of skills and knowledge required to work as a competent servant and recognition of the need for a thorough grounding in domestic science to be provided by schools. The breadth of the subjects covered indicates that the girls passing through the centre were predominantly destined to become 'maid of all work', rather than specialist servants. Yet additional training could be acquired 'on the job', through serving as an apprentice to higher ranking staff. This is evident in the GFS 'Thrift' pamphlets when emphasising the need for specialisation and training as a way to access higher wages. One leaflet advised girls that:

you will gain far more in the end by spending some years on learning a trade for less payment, or perhaps for none except your board and lodge, than by beginning in what looks at first sight a more tempting way. For instance, if a girl of fifteen or sixteen has a chance of going as kitchen-maid under a first-rate cook, who can really teach her the priceless art of good cooking for £7 or £8 a year, or going as a general servant in a country inn for £12; she will be worth double at twenty if she chooses the former place.<sup>99</sup>

The emphasis on specialisation suggests that domestic service was not solely viewed as a short-term stop-gap industry but one that provided skilled long-term careers. Although training would have improved the quality of servants, the extract demonstrates the belief that skilled workers had a higher earning potential and so were less likely to become destitute. The GFS portrayed service as a profession beyond being merely an apprenticeship for marriage and, therefore, claimed it should not be treated as such. Crucial differences between the domestic duties of a wife and

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<sup>97</sup> WGAS: E/N/13/4/1, Glyn Neath Domestic Science Centre: Head Teacher's Logbook 1916-1923.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> CCL: 'Thrift Leaflets' series No. 4 'Earning', GFS, p. 2.



a maid were outlined. Servants were to be experts at one branch of domestic arts while it was the role of wives to possess broader general knowledge. Working hours were to be used exclusively for learning ‘perfectly one piece of woman’s work’ and trying ‘to surpass all others at the special department you make your own’. Other branches of domestic science were to be studied if desired during recreation time, if a servant hoped eventually to be able to do her ‘duty as a woman in family life’.<sup>100</sup> According to this evidence, service offered the potential for girls to form a secure career if they were wise in their choice of positions.

Domestic Service also provided a rare opportunity to enter universities and colleges in order to train as domestic science teachers. As these places were funded by local government scholarships they were not restricted to middle-class applicants. Training could potentially increase the status of the workforce, reduce the stigma and help normalise the presence of women in higher education. In 1890 the South Wales and Monmouthshire School of Cookery and Domestic Arts was established in Cardiff. It was managed by the University College in partnership with the Council of the City of Cardiff, the County Borough Councils of Merthyr and Swansea and the County Councils of Glamorgan and Monmouthshire.<sup>101</sup> In England such schools were run entirely by the respective local authorities but the University’s involvement in the school suggests that they were aware of the requirement for such an institution ‘especially in Wales’.<sup>102</sup> As there was high employer demand, fewer positions available to women in Wales owing to the dominance of heavy industry, training provision for servants was of great importance. The nature of the school shows that women were beginning to find a place in post compulsory education, even if it was to study domestic arts. So popular was the school that its records reveal a move to larger premises was required by 1894. Yet by 1909 the school had run into financial difficulty as tuition fees and grants from the Board of Education (awarded to applicants subject to entry exam) failed to cover their costs, provoking one of its directors to state that:

the fact that the school has proved so successful from an educational point of view, shows how necessary it is for the community that a school of this character should exist. This school which is the only school of its kind in the

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, pp. 2-3.

<sup>101</sup> GA: GD/E/18/22, Domestic Science Centre: Conference Reports; *Kelly’s Trade Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales*, 1901, p.174.

<sup>102</sup> *Kelly’s Trade Directory of Monmouthshire and South Wales*, p. 174.

Principality, and one of the largest in the kingdom, ought not to be closed, and this is a possibility which faces the school in the very near future.<sup>103</sup>

Of the 572 girls that had passed through the school by 1909, thirty went on to teach domestic science in Cardiff, 48 in the rest of Glamorgan and 12 in Monmouthshire, many of whom would have been based in centres such as that at Glyn Neath.<sup>104</sup>

Therefore, the demand for competent domestic servants by the end of the period provided the opportunity for status enhancement through the training of girls and the provision of teaching positions for other women. The recognition of the need for training contradicts the unskilled perception of the work, while the existence of education and training facilities in the area greatly challenges the notion that Welsh servants were 'a large pool of talent that was allowed to stagnate'.<sup>105</sup>

However, training young girls for service was highly controversial. It was feared that an intense focus on domestic science would prove detrimental to wider female education and limit opportunities outside the industry. Indeed, most contemporary supporters of female education viewed it primarily as a method of 'inculcating the skills of efficient wives and mothers' as well as 'a means of training domestic servants' rather than an attempt at 'breaking the link between femininity and domesticity'.<sup>106</sup> Consequently, by 1919 the inclusion of domestic science in both the primary and secondary school curriculum was being heavily criticised. This was most evident in the discourse of the National Union of Teachers.<sup>107</sup> The union recognised the high demand and need for trained servants as, even in the aftermath of the First World War, there were still only a limited number of employment options available to women and so domestic training was of great benefit to staff and householders alike. Training gave girls the opportunity to secure the better positions while it also aided potential employers in the acquisition of competent domestics. Yet, first and foremost domestic science was designed to fit young girls with the skills of cookery and housekeeping needed in adulthood, regardless of whether they entered service. Yet, many of its representatives recognised that there were a number of drawbacks to the introduction of domestic science lessons into schools. The

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<sup>103</sup> GA: *Domestic Science Centre: Conference Reports*.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> Scadden, 'Be Good Sweet Maid and Let Who Will Be Clever', pp. 1 and 3.

<sup>106</sup> Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, pp. 11 and 12.

<sup>107</sup> 'Girls and Service: Rhondda Objection to Domestic Training', *Western Mail*, 25 April 1919.

Cambridge representative, Mrs Manning, argued that although training should be offered in schools it should remain optional. She reasoned that:

in these days of complete freedom, nothing should be made compulsory. They were all against vocational training and domestic service was nothing but vocational. Many women tried to wrap the question up in phrases like “scientific training”. It sounded all very well. There were women who gilded their shackles and hugged them. At present the situation was that girls who had been into the world now believed that there was something more for women beyond domestic work.<sup>108</sup>

Her argument touched on several core issues. Firstly, it reflected the growing prejudice against manual work and particularly that undertaken by women.<sup>109</sup> It also revealed that not all women shared Mrs Manning’s belief that service enslaved young girls and that many supported attempts at elevating the status of servants through training. It also suggested that the First World War had a significant impact on the way women regarded service. In this respect the evidence chimes with the arguments of Leonore Davidoff when claiming that post-war notions such as the ‘concept of citizenship’ greatly challenged the willingness of women to resume their previous economic roles.<sup>110</sup> However, despite the aspirations cultivated by women’s wartime experiences, service remained an essential source of employment for girls throughout the interwar period.<sup>111</sup> Another representative, Miss Griffiths, believed that it was particularly important in her home district of the Rhondda, that domestic science was not introduced as it would channel even more local girls into the industry and hinder their broader their education. She claimed:

if they [girls] wasted their time at cookery schools, they were handicapped in their educational work. The mothers [of the young girls in the Rhondda] were afraid that if this kind of training was to be introduced into the continuation schools it was with the idea of making highly efficient domestic servants for the use of the employing class. That was what they were up against all the time. If they read the correspondence in the press on the shortage of domestic servants, they would realise that the fears of parents were not without cause.<sup>112</sup>

This extract suggests that many Welsh parents disliked the entry of their daughters into service. This contrasts with the personal testimony of some of the women interviewed as part of the Swansea Valley Audio History Project.

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<sup>108</sup> ‘Girls and Service: Rhondda Objection to Domestic Training’, *Western Mail*, 25 April 1919.

<sup>109</sup> P. Summerfield, and G. Braybon, ‘*Out of the Cage*’: *Women’s Experiences in Two World Wars*. (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1987), p. 20.

<sup>110</sup> L. Davidoff, ‘Mastered for Life: Servant and Wife in Victorian and Edwardian England’, *Journal of Social History* 7 (1974) p. 417.

<sup>111</sup> Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War*, p. 181.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Girls and Service: Rhondda Objection to Domestic Training’, *Western Mail*, 25 April 1919.

For them service was far preferable than some of the other positions available to women in heavy industry for instance.<sup>113</sup> Therefore, it becomes evident that the training of servants was a contentious issue. It may be seen as a method of improving the status of servants and facilitating the entry of women into training and higher education. Yet, it tightened the 'gilded shackles', as academic learning was sacrificed for greater employer comfort and convenience.

Domestic service was also an important vehicle for male and female migration. For many young women the desire to travel or relocate was a key reason for entering the industry. One maid, Mrs Lewis, originally from Ystradgynlais, used service to travel around Britain. She firstly moved from Manchester to Swansea then onto Watford asserting that 'I found that job in Swansea by myself... and I decided I would go to Watford and I would do it on my own, so went to Watford'.<sup>114</sup> Servant migration provoked significant public anxiety as discussed in chapter three. Although poverty induced many Welsh girls during the inter-war years to travel to London in search of work, prior to the outbreak of the First World War, few maids needed to move beyond the nearest town to secure employment owing to the plethora of local vacancies.<sup>115</sup> So high was the level of demand that a significant number of servants were attracted into south Wales to find work as shown in Figure IV.II. This would suggest that south Wales was viewed as an important location for servant recruitment in Britain.

Aberdare had a high number of servants born outside the town, yet the presence of heavy industry suggests that many may have accompanied male relatives seeking work in the coal industry. There is evidence to suggest that some Welsh employers purposely sought staff from outside the area. Vacancies for positions in towns such as Newport and Cardiff were advertised in regional publications for example *The Bristol Mercury* and *The Hampshire Advertisement*, as well as national

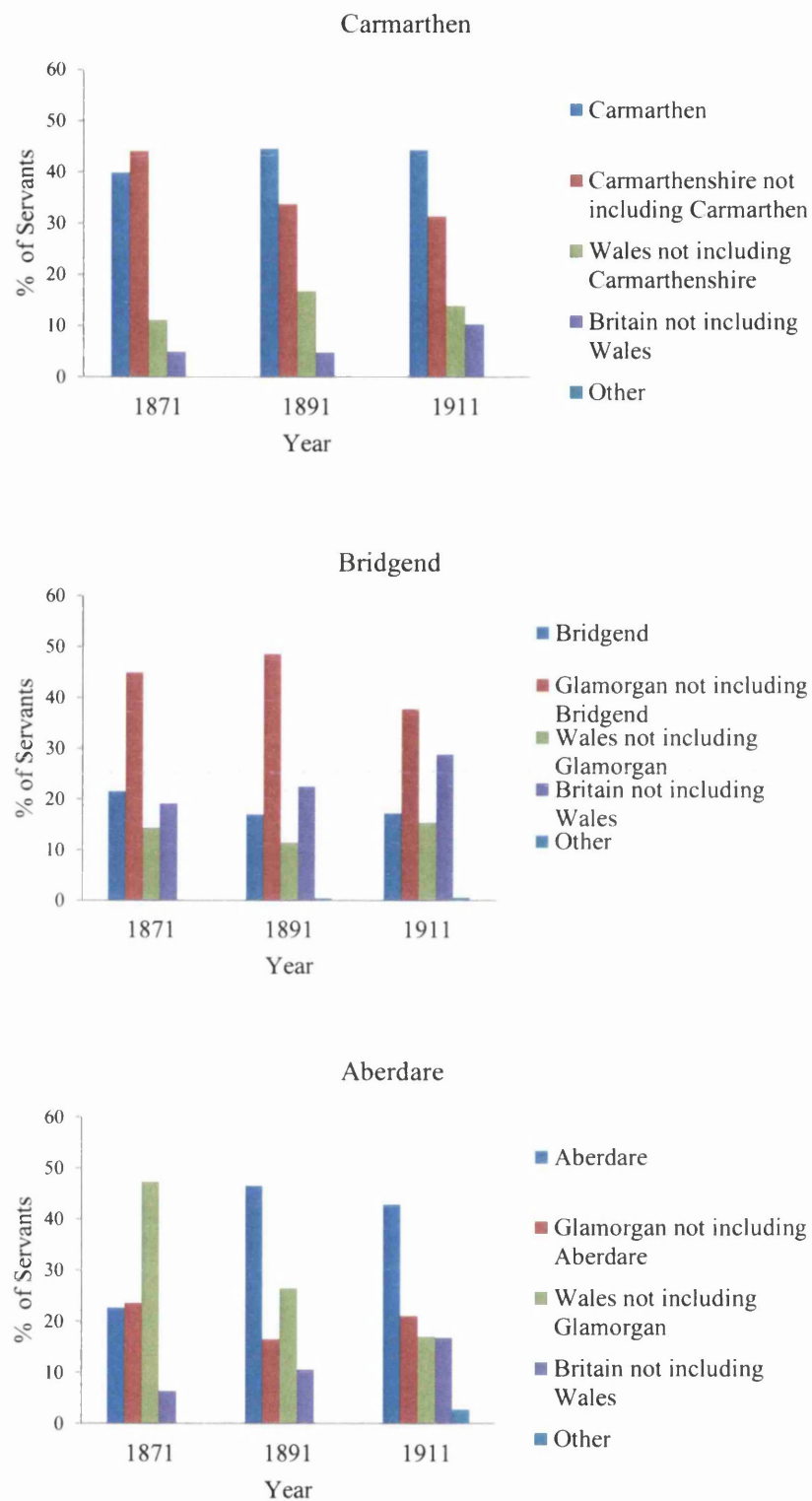
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<sup>113</sup> SWML: AUD/399, Women's' Work Experiences.

<sup>114</sup> NLW: EX/1906, The Reminiscences of Ada Carter; SWML: AUD/478, Women's' Work Experiences.

<sup>115</sup> M. A. Williams, 'The New London Welsh: Domestic Servants 1918-1939' *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* 9 (2003) p. 135.

Figure IV.II. The birthplace of servant's employed in the three case-study towns, 1871-1911.



Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1871, 1891 and 1911.*

papers such as *The Morning Post*.<sup>116</sup> Larger households such as Baglan House, Tredegar House and the Llanover Estate also recruited long-distance migrants. In 1871, over half (53.7 percent) of domestics working in Aberdare had been born outside Glamorgan, with the largest proportion originating from other counties in Wales. However, the birthplace composition of the servant workforce in Bridgend most strongly suggests south Wales was an important area for servant recruitment. Bridgend had the smallest proportion of domestics that had been born in the town itself. Instead the vast majority had moved into the area from other locations in Glamorgan. Yet, despite being located south of the coalfield, in 1871 and 1891 a third of its servant workforce originated from outside the county. By 1911 long-distance domestics from outside Glamorgan accounted for 44.2 percent of servants in the town. It is possible that some of these workers migrated with their families to find work in the mines and then moved to Bridgend after leaving school to find work as a servant. However, the high proportion of migrant servants reflect the portrayal of Glamorgan by the Welsh novelist Allen Raine as the 'El Dorado of the Welsh peasants'.<sup>117</sup> Raine's *A Welsh Singer* follows the story of Myfanwy, a Carmarthenshire sheppardess, who sets out to enter service in Glamorgan and eventually becomes the famous opera singer, La Belle Russe. The novel suggests that the popular perception of Glamorgan as an area of opportunity extended beyond those seeking work in the mines.

In contrast, Carmarthen had a fairly insular workforce, owing to its westerly location and the rural nature of its economy. Yet, even in Carmarthen, 16 percent of domestics included in the 1871 census sample originated from outside Carmarthenshire. This proportion continued to rise up to 21.5 percent in 1891 and 24.2 percent in 1911. The majority of these servants came from neighbouring rural counties, however, as the period progressed British servants from outside Wales became a more notable presence. Rural poverty would have induced many short-distance migrants to move to the town specifically seeking domestic employment. Nevertheless most domestic servants in south Wales were of local origin and needed to move no further than the nearest town. In Carmarthen and Aberdare the overall proportion of servants from the towns themselves increased between 1871 and 1911

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<sup>116</sup> 'Situations Vacant', *The Bristol Mercury*, 19 October 1872; 'Situations Vacant', *The Hampshire Advertisement*, 10 June 1874; 'Situations Vacant', *The Morning Post*, 28 April 1892.

<sup>117</sup> A. Raine, *A Welsh Singer* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1897), p. 63.

as those from their often rural hinterlands declined. This reflected the general slowdown in rural to urban migration as the nineteenth century progressed.<sup>118</sup> Although at the start of the period rural poverty and a fall in the number of agricultural jobs had induced many young people to move to the rapidly developing urban centres, by 1911 country-born workers were much scarcer owing to the depopulation of rural communities.<sup>119</sup> In contrast, the servants in Bridgend were increasingly sourced from rural counties, both in Wales and the south-west of England, as the percentage of local servants fell.

Variations in the composition of the workforce can also be seen in England. Studies have revealed that Londoners comprised only a quarter of the capital's service workforce, while similarly only 22 percent of servants in Lancaster were born locally.<sup>120</sup> However, approximately 67 percent of York's workforce and 75 percent of Colchester's originated from in their cities.<sup>121</sup> The low proportion of locals engaged in service in London reflects the high number of migrants attracted to the capital city. In contrast, the high number of local staff entering Colchester's domestic service sector has been attributed to the lack of alternative sources of female employment in the area.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, migration, although not a necessity, certainly provided the opportunity for travel and expansion of cultural horizons. However, the degree of independence obtained through migration was often curtailed by employer control, which could be even more severe than that exercised by their parents (see chapter five for discussion on employer and servant relationship). Nor was total independence ever fully achieved by all migrants as once again demonstrated by retired servant, Mrs Lewis. Despite using domestic service to facilitate her movement around Britain, she was forced to resign her position in Watford to nurse her sick mother in Ystradgynlais. She explained that while home on leave her mother became

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<sup>118</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 116.

<sup>119</sup> D. Baines, *Migration in a Mature Economy: Emigration and Internal Migration in England and Wales, 1861-1901* (Cambridge: University Press, 1985), p. 15.

<sup>120</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 35; S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880- 1914' in *Economic History Review* 62 (2009), p. 412.

<sup>121</sup> McBride *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 35; L. Davidoff, and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-Class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987), p. 309.

<sup>122</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 389; Colchester was a largely rural market town. In the mid-nineteenth century most inhabitants worked in small shops or agriculture. A third of the population were employed in craft work, one-fifth were engaged in domestic service and only one in twenty worked in service. J. Cooper and C. R. Elrington, 'Modern Colchester: Economic Development', *A History of the County of Essex: Volume 9: The Borough of Colchester* (1994), [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk), [accessed: 10 May 2013], pp. 179-198.

ill and so 'they decided to keep me at home', as her eldest sister was working in a hospital in Chichester, two siblings were still in school and her three brothers and father worked.<sup>123</sup> Her account strongly suggests that this was not her decision but one made by her family. Yet, regardless of the extent of freedom gained or the distance travelled, their independence was often short lived and ended with marriage.

Domestic service also influenced the role of female servant employers facilitating their entry into the public sphere of work and charity, providing the opportunity to develop a wider range of skills and attain the position of employer. The census enumerators' books provide numerous examples of female heads of households engaged in paid employment. Single and widowed servant-employers were recorded as holding a range of occupations such as shopkeepers, teachers, clerks, hotel owners, cooks, landowners, and bank cashiers.<sup>124</sup> Yet the impact of service on the role of women in nineteenth-century society has been debated. While it has been thought that the recruitment of domestic staff enabled more educated women to enter the public arena as they were unencumbered by domestic duties, others have viewed it merely as transference of workload on to lower status women which again served to reinforce the connection between femininity and domesticity.<sup>125</sup> The involvement of middle-class mistresses in charitable activities also assisted in their acquisition of a range of skills and experiences. Fund raising, campaigning, sitting on committees and running servant registries and homes all rendered women more publicly visible, gave many housewives a sense of purpose beyond their role as mother and wife, and equipped women with many essential skills such as organisation, public speaking and lobbying.<sup>126</sup> Their activities had variable success. Many female servant-employers were consulted for the Report of the Women's Advisory Committee on the Domestic Service Problem (1919). However, once the findings were submitted it would appear that no government action was taken on its recommendations. Yet women were instrumental in the organisation of charitable services such as registries and homes such as that previously mentioned in Cardiff by the Ladies Association for the Care of Friendless

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<sup>123</sup> SWML: AUD/478, Women's' Work Experiences.

<sup>124</sup> *Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen 1871, 1891, 1911.

<sup>125</sup> J. Giles, 'Authority, Dependence and Power in Accounts of Twentieth-Century Domestic Service' in L. Delap, et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 208.

<sup>126</sup> Steinbach, *Women in England*, pp. 52-3.



Girls. The positions of president, vice president, secretary, treasurer and matron were all occupied by married women.<sup>127</sup> For example, the vice-president was Mrs Catherine Vaughan, wife of the Dean of Llandaff Cathedral.<sup>128</sup> As well as helping to organise the servant's home and registry she also employed six live-in domestics of her own including a housekeeper, ladies' maid, two housemaids, kitchen maid and footman.<sup>129</sup> It is unlikely that the elderly Mrs Vaughan would have been quite so active in her philanthropic efforts had she not a team of domestics performing her household chores. Yet many other mistresses often worked alongside their servants, while others failed to employ servants at all and so even the liberating effects of employing a domestic was not universal.<sup>130</sup>

Domestic service also created the opportunity for women to acquire authority and status through their position as mistress and employer. Yet, the extent of their authority has been disputed as mistresses were subject to their husbands' control as he retained ultimate responsibility for the household.<sup>131</sup> However, while the majority of servant-keeping households had male heads a significant proportion were female. In Aberdare and Bridgend approximately one in ten households were run by women and in Carmarthen the figure was even higher at one in five.<sup>132</sup> In these homes women would have exercised their own authority rather than relying on the instructions of their husbands. Therefore, domestic service had as ambiguous impact on middle-class employers as it had on the servants themselves.

Nineteenth century separate sphere ideology had an especially significant impact on the public perception of both male and female servants. Despite the accusations of effeminacy directed at indoor menservants, alcoholism and promiscuity were the central social concerns surrounding the predominantly outdoor male workforce in south Wales. These reflected wider social concerns about the conduct of working-class men. Domestics rarely featured in the temperance society membership lists.<sup>133</sup> In Carmarthen there were only five servants listed between 1841

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<sup>127</sup> CL: 948.2 536 LAD, *Pamphlet Free Registry and Training Home for Young Servants, Cardiff*.

<sup>128</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Llandaff, 1881.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>130</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 20; Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers', pp. 420-1; L. Davidoff, and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 388.

<sup>131</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 391; Flanders, *The Victorian House*, p. xxxi.

<sup>132</sup> *Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>133</sup> W.R. Lambert, *Drink and Sobriety in Victorian Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1983), p. 96.

and 1859, while in Newport between 1882 and 1885 there were none.<sup>134</sup> However, this does not provide conclusive proof that male servants consumed any more alcohol than men employed in other sectors. This servant stereotype was partly founded on wider social concerns about the consumption of alcohol amongst the working-class population and was fuelled by the nonconformist belief that Welsh alcohol consumption was higher than the British average. Temperance was more potent a cause in Wales than in any other Protestant country owing to the centrality of the chapel, class and language divides.<sup>135</sup> As a result temperance was broadly perceived as not just a sign of sobriety and reliability, in practical terms, but was also indicative of moral and spiritual purity, respectability and superior status.<sup>136</sup> All of which made drunkenness anathema to most Welsh servant-keepers. Furthermore, migrants, particularly those without families, were deemed most likely to indulge in drink. This too, helps explain why male servants, known for their higher geographical mobility and late marriage age, were particularly stigmatised.<sup>137</sup>

The association between male servants and drunkenness was evident in contemporary discussions about recruitment fairs, with one American travel writer, claiming that there was ‘a considerable consumption of cwrw da’ at the events as ‘a temperance or teetotal fair would hardly thrive. The men are of a certain bearish roughness which would, beyond question, prove uncomfortable to such of us as have been gently bred’.<sup>138</sup> The 1881 travelogue highlights how the perception of the fairs was greatly influenced by social prejudices against working-class men. Yet, in defence of servants, a correspondent to the *Western Mail* claimed that while their conduct could be improved ‘the number of convictions against them [servants] for drunkenness will compare favourably with that in any other trade or profession’.<sup>139</sup> However, the public nature of the fairs created a distinctive target at which those favouring temperance could direct their scorn.

Alcoholism caused a particular problem in households headed by females. Where misconduct did occur, not only did inefficiency result but the reputation of the

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid, p. 14.

<sup>137</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 87.

<sup>138</sup> W. Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, Rivington, 1881), p.195. The term ‘cwrw da’ means ‘good beer’.

<sup>139</sup> ‘Hiring Agricultural Servants’, *Western Mail*, 25 January 1877.

entire household was jeopardised. Consequently, many female householders were reluctant to hire male workers for fear of not being able to control their behaviour, especially as most men worked outside, away from their employer's gaze.<sup>140</sup> Single male workers were believed to be particularly problematic and were, therefore, less sought after than their married counterparts. The troublesome nature of unmarried male servants even found its way into popular contemporary fiction. This is demonstrated in a contemporary short-story by Arthur Conan Doyle. The story centres on the relationship between a recently widowed butler and a Welsh housemaid. It is one of the very few works of fiction by an English author to include a representation of a Welsh domestic maid during the era studied. In 'The Musgrave Ritual' an employer laments the passing of his butler's wife and voices his hopes that he will marry again as single men held the potential to cause domestic disharmony especially when working alongside maids.

When he was married it was alright, but since he has been a widower we have had no end of trouble with him. A few months ago we were in hopes that he was about to settle down again, for he became engaged to Rachel Howells, our second housemaid; but he has thrown her over since then and taken up with Janet Tregellis, the daughter of the head gamekeeper. Rachel who is a very good girl, but of an excitable Welsh temperament, had a sharp touch of brain fever, and goes about the house now- or did until yesterday- like a black-eyed shadow of her former self.<sup>141</sup>

Similarly, many situation vacant advertisements specified that only married men would be considered. For example one read, 'wanted, good gardener; married; charge of two cows; to live in lodge. J. Humphrey, Llanwenarth House, Abergavenny.'<sup>142</sup> These suggest that some employers preferred older married men as they were thought more respectable and reliable than their younger, single counterparts.

Despite a heightened awareness of the evils of alcohol in Wales it was not just male servants who were targeted and not only Welsh domestics who felt stigmatised. Instead, it appears to have been a British-wide stereotype. A domestic servant writing to the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* in 1880, complained that the:

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<sup>140</sup> Davidoff, and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p.392.

<sup>141</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, 'The Musgrave Ritual' in *The Complete Stories of Sherlock Holmes* (London: Wordsworth Editions, 2007), p.728.

<sup>142</sup> Situation Vacant Adverts, *Western Mail*, 13 March 1891.

charge of drunkenness against gardeners as a body is often made against us, generally and regularly, by all sorts of people... It seems to have become a general term of reproach... This apparent consensus of opinion amongst literary men of the morals of gardeners is not, cannot be, from a personal, an intimate, a practical acquaintance with gardeners as a body.<sup>143</sup>

The disgruntled gardener continued to protest that the profession was unjustly connected to alcoholism:

I here kick at, denounce, spurn in righteous indignation and demand that we shall be judged as a body of men, and not from a black sheep here or there. It is true that there are black sheep in our profession - we all admit it, and sorrow over it - but then there are black sheep in every profession.<sup>144</sup>

This article suggests that the connection between male domestics and alcoholism was not a Welsh national stereotype but a gender and class association, although it had more potency in the nonconformist culture of Wales.

Promiscuity was also a frequent accusation directed at male servants. It reflected wider social concerns about Welsh morality, lower-class habits and the respectability of servants. In Glamorgan, particularly, it was claimed that 'generally the unmarried men-servants ranged the countryside at night demanding admission to female servant quarters'.<sup>145</sup> The Superintendent of Police in Glamorgan reportedly 'heard the most revolting anecdotes of the gross and almost bestial indelicacy with which sexual intercourse takes place on these occasions'.<sup>146</sup> The Archdeacon of St David's also declared that 'bastardy was common, unchastity... the rule' among servants in south Wales.<sup>147</sup> These accusations were likely the result of national prejudices constructed and disseminated by the Blue Books and it should be noted that the accounts were largely based on hearsay rather than first hand testimony.<sup>148</sup> The evidence for south Wales indicates that it was generally the uncivilised conduct of male servants rather than fears over effeminacy that formed the primary concern for contemporaries. This contrasts with the conclusions of historians such as Bridget Hill and Tim Meldrum that effeminacy was the main source of anxiety surrounding

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<sup>143</sup> 'Gardeners and Drunkenness', *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 6 August 1880.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 155.

<sup>146</sup> Joseph Kay, 'Social Condition and Education of the People' (1850) in E. S. Turner, *What the Butler Saw: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Servant Problem* (London: Penguin Publishers, 2001), p. 230.

<sup>147</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 155.

<sup>148</sup> R. Davies, *Secret Sins: Sex, Violence and Society in Carmarthenshire 1870-1920* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996) p.156.

men engaged in the sector. Meldrum has argued that 'gender was an inescapable element, as female servants defended their sexual credit while male servants tried to maintain their pride and dignity'.<sup>149</sup> Meanwhile, Bridget Hill has claimed that 'working-class definitions of masculinity and independence made domestic service less and less palatable to young men'. However the impact of male stereotypes on the appeal of the sector to young men in Wales was limited. This is evident in the increased proportion of male servants in the service workforce as the period progressed.

The difference in findings may be attributed to the type of male servants studied. Most scholarly study has been directed at indoor staff such as footmen and butlers, who were frequently viewed as effeminate owing to their primarily 'ornate' function as symbols of affluence.<sup>150</sup> Their 'light' duties such as answering doors and polishing silver, conducted in the domestic sphere of the home compounded the notion of effeminacy, while the residential nature of their position, their subservient attitude and refined manners also contrasted greatly with the traditional male stereotype. The general lack of concern over the effeminacy of male servants in south Wales was the result of the outdoor, skilled and manual nature of their work. In the case of all three towns the largest group of male servants were gardeners, while many others worked as grooms, ostlers and coachmen. Of all the male occupations that featured in the census enumerators' books for Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, 83.3 percent of positions were based outside. Of those men who were located indoors, over three quarters were engaged in commercial premises such as hotels as boots, caretakers, and ostlers.<sup>151</sup> These were predominantly skilled manual workers. Their skill level afforded them respect while the physical and outdoor nature of the work neutralised the threat to their masculinity.<sup>152</sup> This evidence suggests that most male domestics were not engaged in occupations that challenged contemporary notions of masculinity. Rather, social stereotypes of working-class men had the greatest impact on the way male domestics were perceived in wider society.

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<sup>149</sup> T. Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2000), p. 66. Hill, *Servants*, p. 39.

<sup>150</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 64.

<sup>151</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>152</sup> Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 97.

Yet, the dependence of male domestics on their employers contrasted greatly with the traditional gender ideology of male independence. Likewise, the engagement of a male servant also held the potential to influence the perceived masculinity of the master. The novels of the Carmarthenshire author, Allen Raine have highlighted the ambiguity surrounding the gender stereotype of male servants and employers. They have featured in many of the stories and were portrayed as both figures of derision and mockery but also wisdom and integrity. One key cause for concern was the potential threat male servants posed to the authority of their masters. Traditional notions of masculinity appear to have prohibited male domestics from exhibiting the same level of submissiveness to employer rule that their female counterparts often demonstrated. This tension is best seen in the relationship between the character of Shoni and his employer, Methodist preacher Essec Powell in the 1907 novel *By Berwen Banks*.<sup>153</sup> His pragmatism and resourcefulness are frequently depicted as a threat to the independence and authority of his master.<sup>154</sup> The issue finally manifests itself at the end of the novel where the servant directly challenges the power of his employer. Triggered by Essec's attack of his niece Valmai upon discovering her affair with the son of the local Anglican vicar, Shoni orders 'Stop there! Use as many bad words as you like, Essec Powell; but if you dare to touch her with a finger, I'll show you who is the real master here'.<sup>155</sup> This dramatic exchange and the previous underlying tensions chimes with the claims of Judy Giles and Suzanne Beal that domestic staff often rendered employers child-like, useless and dependent.<sup>156</sup> Therefore, while the reliance of male servants on their employers conflicted with the traditional notion of male independence, the engagement of a male servant also impacted on the masculinity of the master.

Raine's novels invite readers to question the criteria by which masculinity is judged. They often present a juxtaposition between middle-class authority, and working-class physical dexterity. Both masters and employers struggle to maintain their masculinity as the former is often portrayed as emotionally and physically weak, while the latter lacked financial autonomy. Yet even this point is undermined

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<sup>153</sup> A. Raine, *By Berwen Banks*, (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1907).

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. pp. 48-50.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. p.201.

<sup>156</sup> S. Beal, 'Changing the Reading of Victorian Maids' in A. Capet, *The Representation of Working People in Britain and France: New Perspectives* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009), p.76; Giles, 'Authority, Dependence and Power', p. 209.

at the end of the novel when it emerges that Shoni had loaned his employer money from the savings he had amassed during his time as a servant. Therefore, *By Berwen Banks* provides a sense that true authority lay not with the minister, who spent most of his time cloistered in his library removed from practical concerns of family, farm or finance, but with the pragmatic, thrifty, hard working and fatherly Shoni. Yet, even Shoni has difficulty accommodating his subservient role with his desire for independence. As a result he interferes in the lives of his employers, carries out 'self-imposed duties' to enhance his role and the dependence of his employer, and often appears confrontational and pretentious. This would suggest a sense of insecurity and inferiority. Leonore Davidoff has argued that a perceived lack of 'manliness' often resulted in 'strained haughtiness and dignity' amongst male servants.<sup>157</sup> Therefore, the masculinity of both masters and domestics were challenged by the service relationship. However, the key concern in south Wales remained its ability to facilitate the indulgence in vices such as drunkenness, promiscuity and general misconduct.

Gender stereotypes also impacted on the public perception of female servants in south Wales. While the nature of the duties reinforced the association between women and domesticity and perpetuated the image of women as home-makers, the dangers of long-distance recruitment and living outside the family home stirred up fears over servant morality. In the same way that the Superintendent of Police in Glamorgan and the Archdeacon of Saint David's portrayed male servants as sexually predatory, Welsh maids were reputed to have been sexual deviants. Intrinsic to this belief was the practice of 'bundling'. One article in the *York Herald* in 1870 reported that 'it appears to be the frequent custom for Welsh servant girls to invite their lovers to the houses of their employers after the family have gone to rest... the men lay on the bed with their coats off chatting to the girls, which interesting occupation in Wales, goes under the name of bundling'.<sup>158</sup> However, such instances of sexual misconduct (with specific reference to it as a Welsh problem) are never mentioned in any of the Welsh publications or indeed in any other sources examined. It can be argued that contemporary fears over 'bundling' or 'caru yn/ ar y gwely' were instigated by the Blue Books, as its 'most vitriolic comments centred on the

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<sup>157</sup> Davidoff, 'Mastered for Life', p. 415; Raine, *By Berwen Banks*, p. 50.

<sup>158</sup> 'Welsh Bundling', *York Herald*, 4 June 1870.

custom'.<sup>159</sup> Therefore, while 'to earlier English travellers [before 1847] it might have been a picturesque survival of a quaint folk-custom, to many early Victorians it was instead a temptation to – and therefore, inevitably, an accusation of – sin'.<sup>160</sup>

However, beyond occasional reports in the national press, it would appear that servants were largely considered by society to make good working-class wives. For many, service provided an acceptable form of employment for women as it was located in the domestic sphere of the home and staff were largely engaged in similar activities to those conducted by wives. As a result it was often viewed as an apprenticeship for marriage.<sup>161</sup> However, this was not a universal belief with some believing that the experiences of a servant did little to fit them for matrimony as 'the kind of instruction given to the girls in the cookery schools was not such as they could put to practical use in their own homes'.<sup>162</sup> Essentially, ex-servants did not have the time, the money or the resources to use the skills they had acquired during their time in service when back home with their families. However, the acceptability of service as a form of female employment and their desirability as wives is demonstrated by Theresa McBride when suggesting that domestic servants were thought to make better wives than factory girls, as it prevented them from acquiring 'crude habits'.<sup>163</sup> The novels of Allen Raine, also, confirmed the idea that service was ideal training for marriage, with female staff characterised by traditional feminine imagery of the mother and the maiden. The housekeeper, Betti, in *On the Wings of the Wind* is very much the matriarch of the house. Having been engaged since her employer, 'Doctor Dan's', childhood, she assumed the position of his adoptive mother. This is demonstrated in his regard for her:

it never entered his mind that it would be possible to remove her, although she was sometimes wilful and interfering. Her curiosity knew no bounds, and she considered a secret withheld from her, or a drawer or cupboard locked, a moral affront; but her real affection for the "young master", which shone through her most troublesome ways, her unselfish and constant care of him and his household; all had endeared her to the man.<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> G. T. Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 164.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. 'Caru yn/ ar y gwely' is the Welsh term for 'bundling'. It literally translates as 'love in/ on the bed'.

<sup>161</sup> P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> 'Girls and Service: Rhondda Objection to Domestic Training', *Western Mail*, 25 April 1919.

<sup>163</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 47.

<sup>164</sup> A. Raine, *On the Wings of the Wind*, (London: Hutchinson, 1903), p.31.



Her maternal nature was also evident in her behaviour towards the other characters and the fact that she was almost exclusively found engaging in domestic tasks. When another servant, Deio, finally proposed marriage to her it was because 'she's the only woman I ever see, and the best maker of cawl and bwdran in all Wales'.<sup>165</sup> Although, partly said in jest the comment indicated that servants had the opportunity to cultivate skills that were highly desirable in a wife.<sup>166</sup> This motherly servant figure re-emerges in several of Raine's novels, as the childless nursemaid Shan in *A Welsh Singer*; the elderly general servant Peggy in *Under the Thatch*; the widowed nursemaid Sarah in *Garthowen*; and the outspoken housekeeper Bettso in *By Berwen Banks*.<sup>167</sup>

In contrast, the novels also provide the alternative view of servant girls as young, innocent maidens. They too generally exhibited traditional feminine qualities that demonstrated that domestic work enhanced rather than degraded femininity. The heroine of *Garthowen*, milk-maid Morva Lloyd, receives a proposal of marriage from each of her employer's two sons. While the ecclesiastical social climber, Will, soon begins to feel ashamed of his connection to Morva, his background and his Welsh identity, the humble hero Gethin increasingly took pride in her abilities, work ethic and integrity. Likewise, rebellious characters that resent their role as domestic servants, are often portrayed in a negative light such as Eyllt in *Under the Thatch*. Throughout the book she becomes increasingly bitter, jealous and ultimately loses her love interest before dying of breast cancer.<sup>168</sup> The notion that service enabled women to demonstrate their most feminine traits of domesticity and caring for others is most evident in the short story 'Thou Shining River'.<sup>169</sup> The story centres on the housemaid Sarah Jones and her employers of fifteen years 'the two old Miss Hugheses'.<sup>170</sup> Her manner towards them is portrayed as caring and sensitive if somewhat infantilising. A direct comparison can be made between her experience in service and her 'busy, happy life' in 'her home amongst the mountains' where she

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<sup>165</sup> Ibid. p.181. 'Cawl' and 'bwdran' are a form of soup and gruel.

<sup>166</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 47.

<sup>167</sup> A. Raine, *Garthowen- A Story of a Welsh Homestead*, (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1900); Raine, *On the Wings of the Wind*; Raine, *By Berwen Banks*; A. Raine, *Under the Thatch* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1910).

<sup>168</sup> Raine, *Under the Thatch*, p.140.

<sup>169</sup> A. Raine, 'Flow On, Thou Shining River' in *All in A Month* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1908) pp. 73-93.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p.93.

eventually married, after the death of her employers, 'the man whom she had loved, and who had loved her from early girlhood'.<sup>171</sup> The evidence from these novels suggest that, rather than being a challenge to traditional female stereotypes, service in many ways helped to reinforce gender doctrines. It was one of the few socially acceptable industries for women to enter and was recognised as a bridging post before and between marriages.

However, there existed a class divide in the perception of servants as potential homemakers. Amongst the working-class populace, service was regarded as an informal 'apprenticeship' to marriage and it was regarded the norm for young girls to spend time in the industry.<sup>172</sup> Sarti has argued that service was in no way a 'handicapping or discriminating experience' for most women.<sup>173</sup> As one middle-class housewife in 1914 wrote, 'a well trained domestic servant is of real value to the nation, she makes the best possible wife and mother, as she has acquired a good knowledge of housewifery and habits of cleanliness, punctuality and to some extent hygiene'.<sup>174</sup> It was the perception of it as a 'ladylike' occupation, performing female chores, working in the domestic sphere, and often surrounded by affluence and luxury, that attracted many working-class girls.<sup>175</sup>

Yet amongst the middle classes, service was viewed as highly disreputable, especially when engaged in by women of a higher social status. It became increasingly controversial as industrialisation progressed and the workforce became larger, more visible, and the modern wage contract became dominant.<sup>176</sup> Middle-class attitudes were voiced during a lively discussion at the 1875 British Association meeting, where it was made clear that service was considered a degrading occupation by some members of society. Lord Aberdare, in attendance at the meeting, acknowledged that:

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid. pp.92-93.

<sup>172</sup> Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 3.

<sup>173</sup> R. Sarti, 'All masters discourage the marrying of their male servants, and admit not by any means the marriage of the female: Domestic Service and Celibacy in Western Europe from the Sixteenth to the Nineteenth-Century' in *European History Quarterly* 38 (2008), p. 428.

<sup>174</sup> C. V. Butler, *Domestic Service* (London: Bell and Sons, 1916), quoted in Braybon and Summerfield, 'Out of the Cage', p. 16.

<sup>175</sup> Braybon and Summerfield, 'Out of the Cage', p. 16.

<sup>176</sup> E. Jordan, 'Female Unemployment in England and Wales 1851- 1911: An Examination of the Census Figures for 15-19 year olds' in *Social History* 13 (1988) p. 3.

whether work is or is not degrading is... a matter of opinion. Parliament, by its laws relating to the employment of women, and public opinion as expressed in a variety of ways, do put a stigma upon certain kinds of occupation. A good deal of the disputes... turned upon the meaning of the word gentlewomen, and ... (it is) questioned whether we could extirpate the feeling of centuries, which was that ladies could not undertake these menial [service] duties without a sense of degradation on their own part and the part of their relatives.<sup>177</sup>

The comments were in response to a speech delivered by Lady Rose Mary Crawshay in defence of her lady-help scheme. Mrs Crawshay's work centred on training classes in the Quebec Institute in London, the establishment of recruitment agency for lady helps and the organisation of events and activities designed to promote the adoption of the scheme in wealthy households.<sup>178</sup> This included the delivery of speeches to organisations such as the Social Science Congress (1874) and the British Association (1875), as well as the publication of pamphlets and generally bringing awareness to the scheme through articles and interviews published in the press. Her plans were not entirely without precedent and echoed the efforts of Florence Nightingale to professionalise the nursing sector through the establishment of training classes in the 1860s, in order to alter the public perception and attract more respectable women into the nursing industry.<sup>179</sup> An improvement in the way female occupations were viewed and the acceptability of higher status women in employment has been thought key to the increasing emancipation of women.<sup>180</sup> Indeed, Mrs Crawshay was said to have been 'one of the most enlightened pioneers of women's emancipation' in nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>181</sup> The fear that the acceptance of lady-helps would normalise the entry of middle-class women into paid employment and advance the cause of female emancipation may have been one reason many people refused to support this charitable initiative. The professionalisation of another female occupation also inspired the introduction of the lady help programme. The increasing requirement of governesses to provide

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<sup>177</sup> 'Lord Aberdare Testimony', *Daily News*, 28 August 1975.

<sup>178</sup> Quebec institute was also known as Seymour Hall based at 15 Lower Seymour Street, Portman Square. As with Moira Terrace in Cardiff, Lower Seymour Street also had a number of institutions for women clustered together. Seymour Street was the location of 'a night home for girls and unmarried women of good character', 'a crèche, or infant nursery', 'the Samaritan Hospital for Women and Children, which was established in 1847' and finally the Quebec institute 'a building where miscellaneous lectures, concerts, &c., are held' From: 'Oxford Street and its Northern Tributaries: Part 1 of 2', *Old and New London: Volume 4* (1878), pp. 406-441. [www.british-history.ac.uk](http://www.british-history.ac.uk) [accessed: 20 June 2013].

<sup>179</sup> B. Abel-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession* (London: Heinemann Educational books Ltd, 1970), p. 18.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid*, p. 30.

<sup>181</sup> 'Interview: Mrs Rose Mary Crawshay', *Women's Herald*, 19 March 1892.

certificates of proficiency, which many middle-class women did not possess, hindered their entry into the sector.<sup>182</sup> Nor were there an unlimited number of positions available as supply exceeded demand.<sup>183</sup> This fuelled the need to make service an acceptable form of employment to help give financial independence to middle-class unmarried women.

To ensure public acceptance of her scheme Crawshay reiterated the differences between 'normal' servants and her lady-helps. Strict guidelines were set out to safeguard the well-being and status of the servants. Her conditions of service were very specific and aimed to ensure that the women maintained their social refinement. This was not only essential to entice respectable women into service but to combat the stigma that often surrounded the domestic service workforce. Mrs Crawshay recommended that the women should only occupy a select number of higher status positions, including cook, lady's maid, kitchen maid, dairy maid and upper housemaid.<sup>184</sup> A pamphlet on the subject issued by her recruitment agency stated that 'Mrs Crawshay will be no party to any lady engaging herself to scour floors, black leaded grates, clean pots and pans, nor to varnish any shoes but her own; neither to carry pails, water, nor coal.'<sup>185</sup> Such tasks were to be carried out by the 'ordinary servants' while she advised 'those who may be induced to give ladies a trial', to 'be guided in what they require of them by what they themselves, if in health and with leisure, could do'.<sup>186</sup> To ensure that the chores allotted to the young women in her employ at Cyfarthfa Castle were not demeaning of the young women, Mrs Crawshay herself undertook several of the tasks before their engagement commenced. Living conditions were another factor that caused concern. These elite servants were said to require their own rooms and especially their own beds. 'As it is probable that lady helps may occupy rooms used before by ordinary servants, employers are requested to have such rooms and bedding thoroughly cleaned: otherwise no one could be surprised were a lady to leave at once.'<sup>187</sup> Lady helps were also to be given access to reading material, musical instruments and occasionally be invited out on drives in the carriage. Mrs Crawshay also suggested that the women

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<sup>182</sup> LSE: HD6/D41, Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen*, p. 7.

<sup>183</sup> K. Hughes, *The Victorian Governess*, (London: The Hambledon Press, 1993), p.37.

<sup>184</sup> LSE: HD6/D41, Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen*, p. 7.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, pp. 40 and 43.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p. 9.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

should never be engaged singularly but as a group. This would ensure that they would continue to enjoy the company of like-minded women of equal status and not be compelled to rely on their employer or the 'ordinary servants' for fellowship.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, the women should be segregated as much as possible from the rest of the household staff and should not even 'be required to take her meals with ordinary servants, but should carry them herself to her own bedroom, failing any other room being appointed her'.<sup>189</sup> These measures were designed to combat criticism that the lady-help scheme risked blurring class boundaries.

However, contemporary press coverage was far from complimentary and revealed significant division in social attitudes. A core concern was that domestic work would degrade the women. To counter this, Mrs Crawshay claimed that 'there is nothing ignoble in work'.<sup>190</sup> The *Morning Post* subsequently stated that the issue was:

not that drudgery is necessarily in itself odious, but it is associated with much that is odious, and with a social class not such as persons of gentle birth and habits care to mingle with. Mrs Crawshay's scheme breaks down this barrier and sets ladies to do the work of labourers' daughters, and persons who are fit for much better things are employed in the occupations of a class generally found to be incapable of anything else.<sup>191</sup>

Mrs Grey, a member of the audience at the British Association meeting argued that the scheme 'would widen the gulf of separation between sexes by degrading the one but not the other'.<sup>192</sup> Another listener, this time clergyman, Mr Mildmay, 'condemned the scheme, warmly asserting that to subject ladies to the companionship of such people as modern butlers, stewards, and footmen was an absolute degradation'.<sup>193</sup> These were criticisms she would repeatedly be forced to respond to in her speeches and publications. In one instance she told the Social Science Congress that 'philanthropists are, I believe, agreed in seeking to raise the status of the human race, rather than seeking to depress it, and exception has been taken to these, plans as lowering the position of ladies rather than raising that of

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid, p. 8.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid, p. 44.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p. 13.

<sup>191</sup> Untitled, *Morning Post*, 30 August 1875.

<sup>192</sup> 'The British Association at Bristol', *Daily News*, 28 August 1875.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid

servants but it is not for us to ordain where demand for female labour shall show itself; we can but deal with circumstances as we find them'.<sup>194</sup>

The debate surrounding lady helps revealed the considerable resistance to any servant recruitment scheme that risked blurring class boundaries. Yet, the sector was never solely the domain of the working-classes but had long-since attracted middle-class women into positions such as companion and lady's maid. Their ambiguous role was not entirely without precedent but reflected those unmarried or widowed kin servants stationed in the household of a wealthy relative. This was a frequent occurrence particularly in the seventeenth century.<sup>195</sup> Mrs Crawshay had, however, made public what had largely been a private concern. Fears over a servant shortage were also made explicit when she assured that her scheme was only intended as a temporary measure to address 'transitional circumstances', as in 'the new era upon which we have entered we shall soon have no servants at all, but be compelled to wait upon ourselves'.<sup>196</sup> Indeed, the engagement of lady helps provoked many commentators into questioning why housewives were unable to perform their own housework if women of a similar social station could do it for financial profit. One such correspondent to the *Western Mail* wrote, 'there is in every family much light work, hardly menial, and certainly not laborious, which, I would suggest, at least in cases of moderate income, might be done by the ladies of the family without fatigue, and without in the least detracting from their dignity. This system has, to my knowledge, been tried in several households, and the result has been the doing with one servant less'.<sup>197</sup> The acknowledgment that there may come a day when the middle-class housewife would be compelled to do her own domestic tasks did little to promote the scheme.

The dismissal of all the lady helps at Cyfarthfa Castle by Mrs Crawshay's own daughter in her mother's absence was viewed by her opponents as proof of the scheme's ineffectiveness. One paper claimed:

our readers will remember that in a previous paper read by her (Crawshay) she proposed to have all the female department of work of her house performed by ladies, who should be paid and treated as such. She tried this experiment, and as

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<sup>194</sup> LSE: Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen*, p. 14.

<sup>195</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, p. 171.

<sup>196</sup> 'The British Association at Bristol', *Daily News*, 28 August 1875.

<sup>197</sup> 'Lady Helps, Materfamilias', *Western Mail*, 6 March 1875.

long as she was at the head of it and bore with its difficulties, and overcame them with that patience which only a fond originator can exercise, all went well. But then compelled by weak health to delegate the cares of her castle to her daughter, who did not admire the system, she had to part with her lady servants. This little circumstance has direct bearing upon the theory if only by the evidence it gives that the family thus served is not unanimous in its estimate of the results. Here we have one of the persons who, from daily opportunities of observation, was well able to judge of its working, declining to take charge of the household unless the ladies were got rid of... This is no slight count against the system, for to be of any real use it must be of general application, and not dependent upon exceptional conditions which can be rarely realised.

Mrs Crawshay only gave the vague explanation that 'the young stand on their dignity, more, than those persons do, who have known life and its sorrows'.<sup>198</sup> The scheme was therefore divisive even in her own household. Despite the demand for better quality staff, society appeared more willing to accept workhouse residents than middle-class women for the fear that this open breach of class roles would pose to social hierarchy.

Beyond fears over the impact of the lady-help programme on middle-class femininity there were some more innate problems with her initiative. Firstly, Mrs Crawshay suggested that the impoverished gentlewomen should only be employed in groups of five or more and that each should receive a salary of between £15 and £25 a year.<sup>199</sup> Yet the average middle-class household was said to engage between one and three servants at between £5 and £15 a year depending on position and seniority.<sup>200</sup> It is unlikely that such households could afford or would be willing to incur the additional costs attached to hiring lady helps. Those elite of employers with the resources to adopt such a scheme were the least likely to be affected by any servant shortage owing to the appeal of prestigious households as they generally tended to attract the higher status domestics from more respectable backgrounds.<sup>201</sup> Therefore, there was little incentive for those employers to recruit Mrs Crawshay's servants. The other problem connected to the scheme focuses on the notion of it being charity. Most charitable activities that used domestic service as a way of absorbing female labour were directed at women from the lower strata of society. However, the lady help scheme demonstrated little concern for such women. In

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<sup>198</sup> LSE: Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen*, p. 34.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid, p. 45.

<sup>200</sup> GA: D/D/LIF300, Baglan House Records, A pamphlet advertising Mrs Hunt's Agency based in London.

<sup>201</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, p. 7.

trying to professionalise the sector and make the upper ranks of service exclusive to middle-class women she was effectively shutting the door to those lower down the social ladder. Her disregard for 'ordinary servants', as she labelled them, is apparent in her argument. The engagement of lady helps necessitated the dismissal of the servants already in place. Yet no mention of this is made in her speeches or publications. In trying to convince the public that service was a respectable industry for middle-class women she actually reinforced many of the stereotypes surrounding the service workforce. For instance, Mrs Crawshay told the British Association that 'it is strange how furiously aggrieved many people are, at my scheme for supplementing some of the shortcomings of ordinary servants by superior intelligence and greater purity of purpose! Are they afraid that I shall abolish ordinary servants more quickly than they will abolish themselves'.<sup>202</sup> The Social Science Congress was told that 'owing to their superior intelligence, ladies get through work much faster than ordinary servants'.<sup>203</sup> In depicting servants as unclean, lazy and unintelligent she was effectively reinforcing the negative stereotypes surrounding the industry and it was this stigma that deterred many girls from entering the sector. Therefore, similarly to other schemes Mrs Crawshay's charitable efforts aimed to use the industry as a way of providing financial independence to women in need, yet, it also drew attention to the need to professionalise the sector. While the intention was to assist women it also served to reinforce the stigma surrounding those already employed in the sector, as well as limiting further employment options by consolidating a class barrier between so-called upper and lower servants.

Yet despite the obvious middle-class ambivalence towards female employment this did not deter most lower-class girls from finding work at some stage in their lives, with pragmatism overriding ideology.<sup>204</sup> Nor was social stigma a barrier to marriage between servants and working-class men. Yet, it has been widely thought that many 'stop-gap' maids entered into the industry secretly hoping to attract a rich employer or a member of his household.<sup>205</sup> A widely circulated joke in the nineteenth century, centred on Welsh maids mistaking the initials of the Great

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<sup>202</sup> LSE: Crawshay, *Domestic Service for Gentlewomen*, p. 43.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid, pp.15 and 16.

<sup>204</sup> Evans, *Education and Female Emancipation*, p. 14.

<sup>205</sup> Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 105.



Western Railway (G.W.R.) for an advertisement for husbands, when travelling to positions in London. This demonstrates the public perception of maids as being in search of wealthy grooms.<sup>206</sup> In England only one or two instances of ‘cross-class’ marriages have been recorded, the most infamous being the case of Arthur Munby, a nineteenth-century civil servant and his maid Hannah Cullwick.<sup>207</sup> This case was notable not only for its rarity but also the detailed diaries they both kept.

Tim Meldrum has claimed that servant-employer marriage was occasionally possible if the social gap was not too wide.<sup>208</sup> Although very few instances of householders marrying their servants are documented in south Wales, it was not entirely unknown. One retired servant interviewed as part of the Swansea Valley Audio Project, married her first and only service employer. The interviewee, Mrs Jones, moved from her local tin works into the sector at the age of fourteen as she had always ‘wanted to get into a gentleman’s service’.<sup>209</sup> In two years Mrs Jones had married her employer, a coal miner (like Mrs Jones’ own father) and widowed father of four. She explained how she had two more children and brought all six up as her own. Little detail is given of the social reaction to their marriage although the relationship appears to have been happy and enduring.<sup>210</sup> Retired farm servant Kate Davies born in Llandysul in 1892, revealed that marriage between members of farming families and those in service were uncommon in rural Wales but not impossible. When asked whether a male servant would ever marry his master’s daughter, she replied ‘oh, not often. Very infrequently. They wouldn’t be pleased at all if that happened. It has happened of course’.<sup>211</sup> This is supported by an examination of the ‘situations vacant’ adverts published in the *Western Mail*. However in most cases the servants were older women engaged as housekeepers by single fathers. Indeed some servants were recruited specifically with the intension of marriage as demonstrated in one advert that read ‘housekeeper wanted by widower (working man) with three children, youngest 3 years, view to matrimony’.<sup>212</sup> Such

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<sup>206</sup> ‘Justice to Wales - Great Western Railway’, *John Bull*, 26 February 1842. The joke centred on the fact that the initials of the Great Western Railway form the Welsh word ‘gwr’ meaning ‘husband’.

<sup>207</sup> D. Hudson, *Munby: Man of Two Worlds. The Life and Diaries of Arthur J. Munby 1828-1910* (London: John Murray, 1972).

<sup>208</sup> Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender*, p. 105.

<sup>209</sup> SWML: AUD/487, Women’s Work Experiences.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Mrs Kate Davies, ‘Welsh Women’s History, 1900-1918’, English language transcript, [www.museumwales.ac.uk](http://www.museumwales.ac.uk) [accessed 1 May 2014].

<sup>212</sup> ‘Situations Vacant’, *Western Mail*, 15 April 1911.

relationships were not motivated by the social aspirations of young girls, but the practical necessity of both parties and possibly the desire for companionship.

While the negative image of servants suggests that the work was not entirely liberating, the perception of a stigma was largely dependent on attitude. Although entry into service appeared degrading to a middle-class mindset for many working-class families, particularly those based in rural areas, it was a sign of respectability to have a child in the industry.<sup>213</sup> Several participants in the Swansea Valley Audio project highlighted how their parents viewed service as preferable to industrial work. For instance, Mrs Landon, when asked why she had become a servant replied ‘well, you see, because there was nothing. My father wouldn’t let me work in a tin works or anything like that’.<sup>214</sup> When asked if such work was looked down on, she answered ‘some reckon it was - but I cried, I wanted to go and work there because I thought they were such happy people... you know they were rough and ready but they were good, a good sort of people’.<sup>215</sup> The ambiguity surrounding the respectability of women working in the tin works was also reflected in the account of Mrs Lewis. She claimed that she had entered into service in Swansea Hospital like many young girls from Ystradgynlais, ‘because there was no work here and my father was not willing for me to work in the tin works’.<sup>216</sup> The oral testimony suggests that many parents regarded service more highly than female positions in heavy industries. For other women interviewed domestic service provided a welcomed escape from the tin works. After gaining experience cleaning her manager’s house (which the female workers were compelled to do on rotation), Mrs Kelly also of Ystradgynlais, left the sector to become a permanent domestic servant.<sup>217</sup> Therefore, gender stereotypes surrounding service were closely interwoven with class stigma for both men and women. Although engagement in service may have had a detrimental impact on the middle-class perception of domestics amongst the working populace stigma was minimal and had little actual impact on their long-term respectability.

It may be concluded that nineteenth century gender ideals maintained an influence over the sector and the way servants were publicly perceived. Despite the

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<sup>213</sup> ‘The British Association Meeting at Bristol’, *Daily News*, 28 August 1875; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 37.

<sup>214</sup> SWML: AUD/399, Women’s’ Work Experiences.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> SWML: AUD/478, Women’s’ Work Experiences.

<sup>217</sup> SWML: AUD/490, Women’s’ Work Experiences.

belief that the subservient aspect of service challenged the conventional understanding of masculinity, the outdoor and skilled nature of the work mitigated most concerns over effeminacy. Rather, fears centred on issues such as drunkenness and licentiousness. Such problems reflect bourgeois concerns over wider working-class habits. Similarly, much of the stigma surrounding female servants also reflected wider concerns about women in work. The fact that the industry was predominantly female in composition and was largely based in private households has led to the common belief that service reinforced the connection between women and domesticity. Domestic service has been set up as a symbol of all that was wrong with the role of women in society. The demise of the 'live-in maid' correlated with the rise of female emancipation. It has therefore become a hobby horse for those wishing to emphasise the oppression of women during the late Victorian and Edwardian period. Yet, this approach oversimplifies the complex relationship between the industry and wider gender roles. The opportunity domestic service presented to those willing or in a position to take it, the assistance it provided to some of the poorest members of society, and the experience and ambition it gave to both employers and servants all had a positive impact on the role of women outside the home. The connection between service and domesticity and the piecemeal nature of the developments in the sector also enabled a very gradual erosion of the bourgeois gender ideals that dominated contemporary society.

**‘We Poor Unprotected Ones’: The Unregulated Nature of the Domestic Service Industry and its Impact on the Servant-Employer Relationship.<sup>1</sup>**

The relationship between domestics and those who engaged them significantly influenced the character and public image of the industry. It also shaped individual experiences of service and the appeal of the sector to potential recruits. The general absence of central regulation had a detrimental impact on the quality of relations in the industry. Central regulation took the form of state legislation and trade bodies, however, the government and unions had little impact in south Wales in promoting better relations between householders and their staff. State legislation was scarce and was seldom concerned solely with the domestic service industry. Meanwhile, a branch of the Domestic Servants’ Union of Great Britain was established in Cardiff in 1892.<sup>2</sup> However, its impact was limited as once the initial surge of enthusiasm at its formation passed, the organisation was notably absent from the local press thereafter and membership was relatively low. This was the result of a number of factors such as the short duration of employment and fragmented workplaces. In many cases, neither servants nor householders welcomed state and union intervention as it was perceived as intrusive, unnecessary, and insulting, especially by those who had positive experiences of service. In the absence of formal regulation, the gradual development of the servant-employer relationship was primarily governed by the changing demographics of domestics and the increasing proportion of business and institution staff. The entry of mature servants into the workforce initiated the decline of the living-in system, and combined with the movement of domestics into hospital and hotels, weakened the paternalism traditionally associated with the servant-employer relationship. To a certain extent, it also helped standardise working conditions and mitigated the worst excesses of the sector.

However, the unregulated nature of the industry led to a continuation of two key problems that blighted many a servant-employer relationship. Firstly, the absence of formal entry standards, particularly for lower-status positions, and the often minimal wages meant that householders and their domestics were drawn from a broad social base. The lack of exclusivity eroded the prestige of both positions and a

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<sup>1</sup> ‘A Poor Servant, Cardiff’, *Western Mail*, 1 December 1892.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Interview with a Promoter’, *Western Mail*, 15 December 1892.

form of professional protectionism developed that vilified the lowest ranks of servants and their employers.<sup>3</sup> This led to a more complicated relationship than ‘upstairs’ versus ‘downstairs’ with social class forming the principal dividing line. Secondly, the lack of regulation also effectively prohibited the establishment of standardised working conditions. This rendered servants vulnerable to poor treatment, abuse, and exploitation. Likewise, employers were left susceptible to theft, incompetence and defamation. This intensified feelings of mistrust and resentment on both sides as each perceived themselves to be the injured party. Factors such as language and religious differences also impacted on the service relationship. While many servants mimicked their employers, in other households mistresses attempted to control servant identity. Issues such as ethnicity, language and religion held the potential to adversely influence relations but in reality they had only a limited and short term impact on individual workers. Therefore, the absence of regulation in the domestic service industry had a significant impact on the character of the industry and nature of the relationships between servant and householder between 1871 and 1921.

The historical discourse surrounding servant-employer relations has largely centred on the issues of class and ethnicity. The domestic service industry and notions of social status were closely intertwined during the late-Victorian and Edwardian period. The engagement of servants has been perceived, by both contemporaries and subsequent historians, as an indicator of affluence.<sup>4</sup> This has frequently led to an oversimplified, ‘upstairs-downstairs’ model of service.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the industry has often been perceived as a conflict between bourgeois or aristocratic employers and their working-class servants. Meanwhile, domestic service has been viewed as a means of asserting bourgeois cultural hegemony.<sup>6</sup> However, recent studies have emphasised the lack of correlation between class divides and

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<sup>3</sup> F.V. Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants: A True Portrait of Upstairs, Downstairs Life* (London: Century in Association with the National Trust, 1973), p. 19 and 38; L. Delap, ‘Kitchen Sink Laughter: Domestic Service Humour in Twentieth-Century Britain’, *Journal of British Studies* 49 (2010) on p. 646; T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820- 1920* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976), p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975), p. 17; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 10.

<sup>5</sup> B. Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 253.

<sup>6</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 24; J. Fernandez, *Victorian Servants, Class and the Politics of Literacy* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 55.

employer and servant status.<sup>7</sup> Likewise, servant response to the class relationship was also split between deference, defiance and detachment.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the impact of the sector on class has proved ambiguous, as it both challenged and reinforced social barriers. Yet notions of social hierarchy have continued to influence the perception of the sector, its workforce and the quality of their relationships with their employers.

The cultural dimension of servant-employer relations has also received a notable degree of attention. The negotiation of ethnic differences has featured in a number of American studies on the service industry.<sup>9</sup> An 'ethnic pecking order' has been identified in the sector with Irish immigrants in America located at the bottom.<sup>10</sup> The prejudice has been attributed to broader national stereotypes that depicted the Irish as radical, savage and dangerous owing to their association with Catholicism and Home Rule.<sup>11</sup> To counter the threat, American mistresses attempted to suppress the native identities of their maids, assimilating them into the dominant (WASP) culture.<sup>12</sup> In Britain ethnic cultural differences and its impact on servant-employer relations during the nineteenth century, has featured less prominently as foreign servants were scarce. Even in 1911 there were only 10,827 females and 1,750 males from outside Britain engaged as domestics in England and Wales.<sup>13</sup> However, recent studies of domestic service in the twentieth century have begun to examine the impact of ethnic cultural divisions on relationships in the sector.<sup>14</sup> This was the result

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<sup>7</sup> J. Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids: Domestic Servants and the Agitation of 1872' in L. Miskell, C. A. Whately, B. Harris, *Victorian Dundee: Image and Realities* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000) p. 112; S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880- 1914', *Economic History Review* 62 (2009) p. 407.

<sup>8</sup> S. Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900-1950' in *Past and Present*, 28 (2009) p. 183

<sup>9</sup> D. M. Hotten-Somers, 'Moral Maids and Materialistic Mistresses: Irish Domestic Servants and their American Employers, 1850-1920' in O. Walsh, *Ireland Abroad: Politics and Professions in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003); A. Urban, 'Irish Domestic Servants, 'Biddy' and Rebellion in the American Home 1850-1900' in *Gender and History* 21 (2009); J. K. Litelman, 'Our Serving Sisters': Swedish-American Domestic Servants and their Ethnic Community' in *Social Science History* 15 (1991).

<sup>10</sup> Litelman, 'Our Serving Sisters', p. 390; Urban, 'Irish Domestic Servants', pp. 263 and 280.

<sup>11</sup> Urban, 'Irish Domestic Servants', p. 364; M. J. Hickman, and B. Walter, 'Deconstructing Whiteness: Irish Women in Britain' in *Feminist Review* 50 (1995) pp. 8-9.

<sup>12</sup> Hotten-Somers, 'Moral Maids and Materialistic Mistresses', pp. 114-115.

<sup>13</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 153.

<sup>14</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, pp. 302-304; L. Delap, *Knowing Their Place: Domestic Servants in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), pp. 17-18, 78-81.

of an increase in the proportion of foreign servants in the twentieth century as the number of au pairs and older cleaning-ladies increased.<sup>15</sup>

Despite a recognition of the important role of the urbanisation process in the development of domestic service during the Victorian period, the impact of national stereotypes, linguistic divides and religious differences have yet to be fully explored.<sup>16</sup> However, a degree of social segregation has been identified in the British service sector, predominantly between Catholics and Protestants, although some Anglican employers also disliked Baptist and Methodist servants.<sup>17</sup> Religious prejudice is believed to have been centred on the perception of Catholicism as 'foreign'.<sup>18</sup> As the home was viewed as a microcosm of the nation, the servant religion was as important to the respectability of the household as Protestantism was to British national identity.<sup>19</sup> For this reason Christianity has also been seen as a form of social control.<sup>20</sup> This was increasingly important as women began playing a larger role in the public sphere, and their absence from home rendered it imperative to train 'domestic servants to perform as surrogates for themselves not only as household labourers, but as moral compasses as well'.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, domestic service has been portrayed as a complex site of both class and racial tension.

A series of letters published in the *Western Mail* during December 1892 has proved central to an examination of working conditions, attitudes and demands for a union. These were penned by servants, mistresses, parents of domestics and general commentators. By the 21 December, so many letters had been received, the editor was compelled to enter a notice stating that 'No letters sent after this date will be used, and the discussion having served its purpose will terminate with the publication of the letters held over'.<sup>22</sup> The newspapers purpose, it may be assumed, was to encourage support for the establishment of a south Wales branch of the Domestic

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<sup>15</sup> Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, pp.17-18.

<sup>16</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 58; J. Musson, *Up and Down Stairs: The History of the Country House Servant* (London: John Murray, 2009), p. 193; P. Horn, *Life Below Stairs in the Twentieth-Century* (London: Sutton Publishing Ltd, 2001), p. 38.

<sup>18</sup> Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 38.

<sup>19</sup> L. Delap et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 1.

<sup>20</sup> M. Beetham, 'Domestic Servants as Poachers of Print: Reading, Authority and Resistance in Late Victorian Britain' in Delap et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 198.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> 'Editor's Notice', *Western Mail*, 21 December 1892.

Servants' Union of Great Britain, as by the 30 December meetings with such intent were being staged in Cardiff's Colonial Hall.<sup>23</sup> Although this study has aimed to explore the attitudes of men and women in the roles of employer and servant, owing to the limitations of the sources (the overwhelming majority of correspondents were women), the chapter is largely concerned with the relationships between mistresses and maids. This reflects the wider absence of sources that recorded the connection between men and servant management.<sup>24</sup> The quantitative evidence utilised in this chapter is based on data obtained from a statistical analysis of the census enumerators' books. The occupation of servant-keepers and the parents of servant were sampled and categorised in accordance with the Armstrong socio-economic classification method.<sup>25</sup> Although this has been regarded as a 'crude analytical tool', for the purposes of this study, it has proved the most practical way of classifying householder occupations.<sup>26</sup> This provides an in-depth understanding of the social divisions that existed in the sector.

Published contemporary accounts have also proved highly useful in the exploration of social tensions and class attitudes in south Wales. Winn Anderson's autobiography *A Rather Special Place: Growing up in Cardiff Dockland* casts light upon the role of servants in both her own home and in her local neighbourhood in the years immediately prior to the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>27</sup> Domestics featured prominently in her work which details a range of workers including live-in maids of all work, dailies and even cottage home children. As well as accounts from employing families, the testimony of Welsh servants is also available in published texts and archival collections. The Women's Cooperative Guild anthology, *Life as We Have Known It* provides a valuable insight into the individual experiences of servants with the accounts of two retired servants, Mrs Smith and Mrs Wrigley being

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<sup>23</sup> 'Servant Girls and their Mistresses', *Western Mail*, 30 December 1892.

<sup>24</sup> Delap, *Knowing Their Place*, p. 83.

<sup>25</sup> Armstrong's classification of census occupations as set out in E. Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census: The Manuscript Returns for England and Wales, 1801-1901* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1989), pp. 93-94: Class I Professional, etc, occupations; Class II Intermediate occupations; Class III Skilled occupations; Class IV Partly skilled occupations; Class V Unskilled occupations.

<sup>26</sup> Higgs, *Making Sense of the Census*, p. 95.

<sup>27</sup> W. Anderson, *A Rather Special Place: Growing up in Cardiff Dockland* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 1993).



of particular interest.<sup>28</sup> This is also true of the interviews from ex-domestics compiled as part of the Swansea Valley Audio Project. These provide rare first-hand accounts of the attitudes and experiences of maids during the early-twentieth century. Likewise, the testimony of two participants in particular, Bessie Hopkins and Mrs Landon, has proved most useful. These retrospective accounts are complemented by the diary of a young maid engaged in the household of Lady Llanover (Augusta Hall). She detailed the way her employer influenced the ethnic composition of the household staff and enhanced their Welsh cultural identity through permitting them to speak only Welsh and to wear national dress.<sup>29</sup> Other contemporary voices can be heard in newspaper and periodical articles appearing in publications as diverse *The Times*, *The Girls Own Paper* and the *Liverpool Mercury*. These focus on subjects such as language divides, religious intolerance and ethnic stereotypes. The qualitative nature of the sources incorporated in this chapter provides an insight into the attitudes and opinions of those most closely connected with the sector. They also unearth the core issues that were at the heart of the service relationship.

Central regulation could take the form of unionism or state legislation. During the nineteenth century protective trade bodies were established in many industries. However, the extent of unionisation of domestic service was limited. In south Wales a branch of the Domestic Servants' Union of Great Britain was set up in Cardiff in 1892. However, membership was low and no further branches are known to have existed in the area. Yet in April 1872 the Dundee and District Domestic Servants' Association had been established as 'culmination of a lively exchange of letters concerning the rights and wrongs of domestic service that, since January, had been filling the columns of a local newspaper'.<sup>30</sup> Twenty years later, in an almost identical manner to that described by Jan Merchant, momentum for a domestic service union in south Wales built up as hundreds of servants and mistresses wrote to the *Western Mail* newspaper to tell of their experiences. Although the first correspondent did not mention explicitly the need for a union (see appendix one),

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<sup>28</sup> M. Llewelyn Davies, *The Classic Life as We Have Known It: The Voices of Working-Class Women* (St Ives: Virago Press, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> The favouring of Welsh national dress was partly the result of Lady Llanover's attempt to help Wales' wool industry, and one of several ways in which she sought to 'preserve and popularise a sense of Welsh identity'. C. Jones, *Women's History Network Blog*, 'The Woman Who Invented Welsh National Dress', [www.womenshistorynetwork.org.uk](http://www.womenshistorynetwork.org.uk), [accessed 1 March 2014].

<sup>30</sup> Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids', p. 104.

two letters published the following day both asserted the need for such a protective trade body.

A correspondent, who signed herself, 'A Poor Servant' concluded her letter by stating 'we are shut out to fight our own battles. Why cannot we have a Servants' Union? Will not someone step up and lend a helping hand to us poor, ill treated servants'.<sup>31</sup> The letter reveals that unionism was becoming commonly regarded as a key source of protection and a potential remedy for many of the ills present in the sector. The appeal for help also suggests that servants felt powerless to take action themselves. Within a fortnight of the initial letter, an organisation calling themselves 'The Servants' Union Committee' had entered the debate, stating:

in our opinion no class of toilers are more worthy, and none more in need of one [a union] than domestic servants. Their interests demand it, and what is more, we are happy to inform your readers that they are going to have it. A servants' union is being formulated, not for ill-advised, unscrupulous agitation, but for the more laudable purpose of materially bettering their condition, protecting their interests, enforcing justice and assisting them-without fee or compensation- in finding suitable situations.<sup>32</sup>

In doing so they would circumvent less reputable recruitment methods and regulate the quality of the workforce. A trade union would help consolidate the perception of service as a recognisable and distinctive industry and any improvement would raise the status of the sector as a whole. Some mistresses could also see the benefit of the creation of a servants' union. One wrote 'I know that in London and Dundee a servants' union has been formed, and I hope that we shall shortly have one in Cardiff'.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, events in Cardiff were part of a wider movement towards establishing a trade union for servants in Britain. As opposed to Wales lagging behind, Dundee was ahead of its time owing to its socio-economic climate. It has been labelled a 'woman's town' owing to the presence of an 'army of female textile workers'.<sup>34</sup> Their disregard for male authority inspired maids to take industrial action and initiate the establishment of a union.<sup>35</sup>

However, there was also a degree of scepticism about the establishment of a domestic servants' union in south Wales. It was feared that if domestics succeeded in

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<sup>31</sup> 'A Poor Servant, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 1 December 1892.

<sup>32</sup> 'The Servants' Union Committee, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 12 December 1892.

<sup>33</sup> 'NYA, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 21 December 1892.

<sup>34</sup> Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids', p. 104.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, p. 105.

acquiring the changes they sought it would lead to a collapse of domestic authority. A satirical song that circulated at the time revealed the anxiety surrounding the creation of servants' unions. It mocked:

I'm not a common servant-maid, you see the style I dress.  
With jacket, bonnet, gloves and bag, just like my mistress.  
You couldn't tell the difference – my walk is just the same.  
One little thing I'm writing now, and that to you I'll name,  
And I'm sure to get my way, girls – I'm sure to get my way –  
Supported by the union, the motto of the day –  
It isn't much I ask for, girls – it isn't much I seek –  
But master ought to take me out one evening in the week.<sup>36</sup>

One journalist writing for the *Western Mail* claimed that the last line 'amounts to a revolution. We know it is done now but it is not a thing we would have a hand in spreading'.<sup>37</sup> It is suggested that maids were already known for their cultural mimicry of mistress and that the union would give servants the upper hand on their employers. The union was therefore, perceived as a vehicle through which servants could narrow the social gap between themselves and their employers and rise above their station in life.

The first meeting of the union in Cardiff's Colonial Hall was attended by 200 servants.<sup>38</sup> At the event, the objectives of the organisation were outlined and included: the provision of 'a sufficient quantity of good, wholesome food'; the receipt 'of home comforts such as were consistent with the station of life of their respective masters and mistresses'; the introduction of a changeable half-holiday from, say two o'clock in the afternoon'; and the compulsion on mistresses to provide a reliable character reference.<sup>39</sup> In addition the union also intended to establish a 'free registry' in each town with a local secretary to look after the girls and find them suitable employment.<sup>40</sup> Beyond its establishment few details of its activities have been discovered suggesting a lack of noteworthy action. This may be attributed to the 'defensive' and 'protective' rather than 'aggressive' character of the movement. This

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<sup>36</sup> 'Wales Day by Day', Servants Union Song, *Western Mail*, 18 January 1893.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> 'Interview with a Promoter', *Western Mail*, 15 December 1892.

<sup>39</sup> 'Servant Girls and their Mistresses: Meeting at the Colonial Hall', *Western Mail*, 30 December 1892.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

was a result of its principal aim to remove 'that feeling of antipathy which now exists between a large number of masters and mistresses and their servants'.<sup>41</sup>

Details of various worker bodies have been documented by several historians, yet they were usually small in scale and short lived. The abortive attempts of maids in Dundee and male servants in Leamington Spa to protest for improved condition in 1872 was followed by a succession of failed unions, such as the London and Provincial Domestic Servants Union (established 1891).<sup>42</sup> Horn has argued that 'the formation of servants' unions did not lead to any spectacular improvements in their conditions, but served rather as a barometer of discontent'.<sup>43</sup> The limited impact of the unions was the result of several factors. Firstly, the scattered nature of the workplaces militated against the co-ordination and organisation of the workforce.<sup>44</sup> The multiple number of service occupations and the broad ranging hierarchy also hindered unionisation especially as higher-status servants were largely unwilling 'to join in agitation organised by lower servants, or vice versa'.<sup>45</sup> Another issue was the fear of losing a reference or even a position by joining a union and as a result membership figures remained low.<sup>46</sup> The failure in Dundee was attributed to the presence of a large number of migrant maids. They were particularly fearful of dismissal as their distance from home rendered them vulnerable, dependant and ultimately passive.<sup>47</sup>

Although it has been suggested that the lack of unionisation was typical of a female dominated industry, Brian Abel Smith, in his discussion of the nursing profession has claimed that 'contrary to common belief, the fact that the vast majority of general nurses were women was not in itself necessarily an impossible obstacle, women had been as willing as men to join some clerical unions'.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, Merchant, in her exploration of the unionisation of maids in Dundee, argued that the unionisation and assertiveness of textile mill and factory women in the town was a

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<sup>41</sup> 'Servants and their Mistresses: The Proposed Servants' Union - Interview with a Promoter', *Western Mail*, 15 December 1892.

<sup>42</sup> Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids', p. 120.

<sup>43</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 180.

<sup>44</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 179.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p. 179.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids', p. 117.

<sup>48</sup> B. Abel-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession* (London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1970), p. 132.

key influence on the events in the domestic service sector.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the feminised nature of service cannot be held solely accountable for the limited success of its unions. Abel Smith has identified a number of alternative factors that also contributed to the failure of nursing unions in the nineteenth century:

There were, however, a number of special organisational difficulties in organizing nurses in the hospital service: the tradition of selfless devotion to the sick, the rapid turnover of staff, the strong and close personal influence of the matron who was the immediate representative of management...But these were not the only reasons. Membership of a trade union involves some measure of sympathy and identification with the working-class movement... Association with working-class activities would have been in conflict with the social aspirations of many members of the profession.<sup>50</sup>

These factors can all be applied to the domestic service industry. The lack of a centralised work place created organisational problems in service. Domestic workers were believed to have had a tradition of servitude and deference that militated against unionisation, and most servants were under the close supervision and influence of either a housekeeper and butler or their actual employers. Paternalism was particularly effective at preventing industrial action. Like Abel Smith, Horn has also asserted that class identity played a significant role in reducing the effectiveness of union activity as some domestics sought to distance themselves from traditional notions of working-class activism and indeed the working-class completely.<sup>51</sup> Therefore, the lack of unionisation may be viewed as a result of the influence of class and the character of the industry rather than gender.

Many of the measures introduced to regulate domestic service during the late nineteenth century were slow and largely ineffective. Awareness of the problems facing the industry was widespread but little had actually been done to remedy the situation. The historical studies have revealed that developments in the industry could be effected through government legislation as well as unionism. However, domestics featured infrequently in government legislation during the era with only two noteworthy bills being passed. The first, the Apprentices and Servants Act, was passed in 1851 following a number of high profile cruelty cases. It threatened employers with a three year custodial sentence for the mistreatment of employees under eighteen years of age. This included failure to provide food, clothes and

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<sup>49</sup> Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids', pp. 116-7.

<sup>50</sup> Abel-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession*, p. 132.

<sup>51</sup> Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, pp. 156-7.

lodgings.<sup>52</sup> It wasn't until 1907 that another attempt was made to safeguard the well-being of servants through the licensing of recruitment agencies. Yet, outside London the enforcement of the new regulations was variable and it was largely aimed at controlling prostitution as much as helping servants.<sup>53</sup>

Although reforms such as the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act and 1911 National Insurance Act included domestic workers, they were seldom the principal subject of any further government bills. The first official enquiry into the industry did not take place until 1918 and this was in response to the desire to channel female labour out of the factories and into service.<sup>54</sup> The Ministry of Reconstruction that conducted the enquiry identified a number of key problems that deterred young girls from entering the sector and proposed a range of solutions. It was claimed that 'loss of social status', deference, and restricted freedoms were the core problems. The establishment of more training centres, the provision of regular meals and holidays as well as 2 hours leisure time a day, nine hours sleep for youths, a maximum working week of 48 hours for non residential staff and the implementation of a standard wage, were all proposed as important solutions. However no action was taken on the commission's findings.<sup>55</sup>

Gardiner has suggested that the scarcity of legislation was the result of the location of the work being largely in private residence therefore rendering enforcement difficult.<sup>56</sup> Yet, Horn and Dawes have claimed that there was actually little public demand for legislation as most people resented state interference in domestic matters.<sup>57</sup> This proved the case with the introduction of the National Insurance Act that compelled employers and servants to each pay 3d. a week to ensure that workers would receive 7s 6d a week for up to six and a half months as well as free medical treatment in the event of sickness.<sup>58</sup> Many felt the legislation would 'threaten the sanctity of the British home' and that the act implied that employers did not govern their households correctly. It was, therefore, perceived as a

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<sup>52</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 119.

<sup>53</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 113.

<sup>54</sup> J. Gardiner, *Manor House: Life in an Edwardian Country House* (California: Bay Books, 2002), p. 175.

<sup>55</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, pp. 167-8.

<sup>56</sup> Gardiner, *Manor House*, p. 174.

<sup>57</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 152; Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 17.

<sup>58</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, pp. 128-9.

‘damnable insult to those millions of generous employers who nursed their sick servants through thick and thin’ and effectively put the ladies of Britain into the unseemly position of being ‘tax-gatherers in their own homes’.<sup>59</sup> Many servants also appeared to disapprove of National Insurance, particularly those that had been looked after in wealthy homes, those who resented the notion of taxation and those who felt themselves to be a ‘caste apart’ from the rest of the working-classes.<sup>60</sup> Discussions surrounding the National Insurance Bill have shown legislation to have been largely unwelcome and divisive.

Those with good experiences of service, both employers and domestics, were also often opposed to unionism and state intervention as they deemed it unnecessary. The *Western Mail* published a number of letters that outlined servant satisfaction and employer contentment with the sector, however, unregulated it may have been. Many workers wrote of their admiration for their employers and their fondness for their work. ‘Mary of Porthcawl’ provided one such example when stating that in eighteen years of service:

I have always met with good place and mistresses. I have not the least cause to regret being a servant... I lived with a lady for three years. I think if I could see her now I would kiss the ground she walked upon, she was so very good and kind to me, not only in one thing, but in everything. I am a woman who has gone through a lot of trials, and I do not think I should have gone through them but for her great help to me. I have nothing to say against service.<sup>61</sup>

Rather than viewing this account as an example of deference, it can be seen as evidence of genuine affection. Although Todd argued that relations between the servants and employers was based on pay and conditions as much as emotional attachment, it appears that where the latter existed the former were easier to tolerate.<sup>62</sup> Likewise, some mistresses showed great sympathy towards the plight of many servant girls. A mistress of twenty years experience told the *Western Mail*, how she was:

sorry to say some so-called ladies treat their servants no better than “white slaves”... I would ask the mistresses what they would do without servants. We should be very thankful that we have the daughters of working men ready to do our work... I would advise all mistresses to treat their servants kindly,

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<sup>59</sup> E. S. Turner, *What the Butler Saw: Two Hundred and Fifty Years of the Servant Problem* (London: Penguin Publishers, 2001), p. 254.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p. 257.

<sup>61</sup> ‘Mary of Porthcawl’, *Western Mail*, 15 December 1892.

<sup>62</sup> Todd, ‘Domestic Service and Class Relations’, p. 190.

encourage them in their work, give them a little recreation and proper food, for this I have proved as a rule, that they will come to respect you and to do your work cheerfully and well.<sup>63</sup>

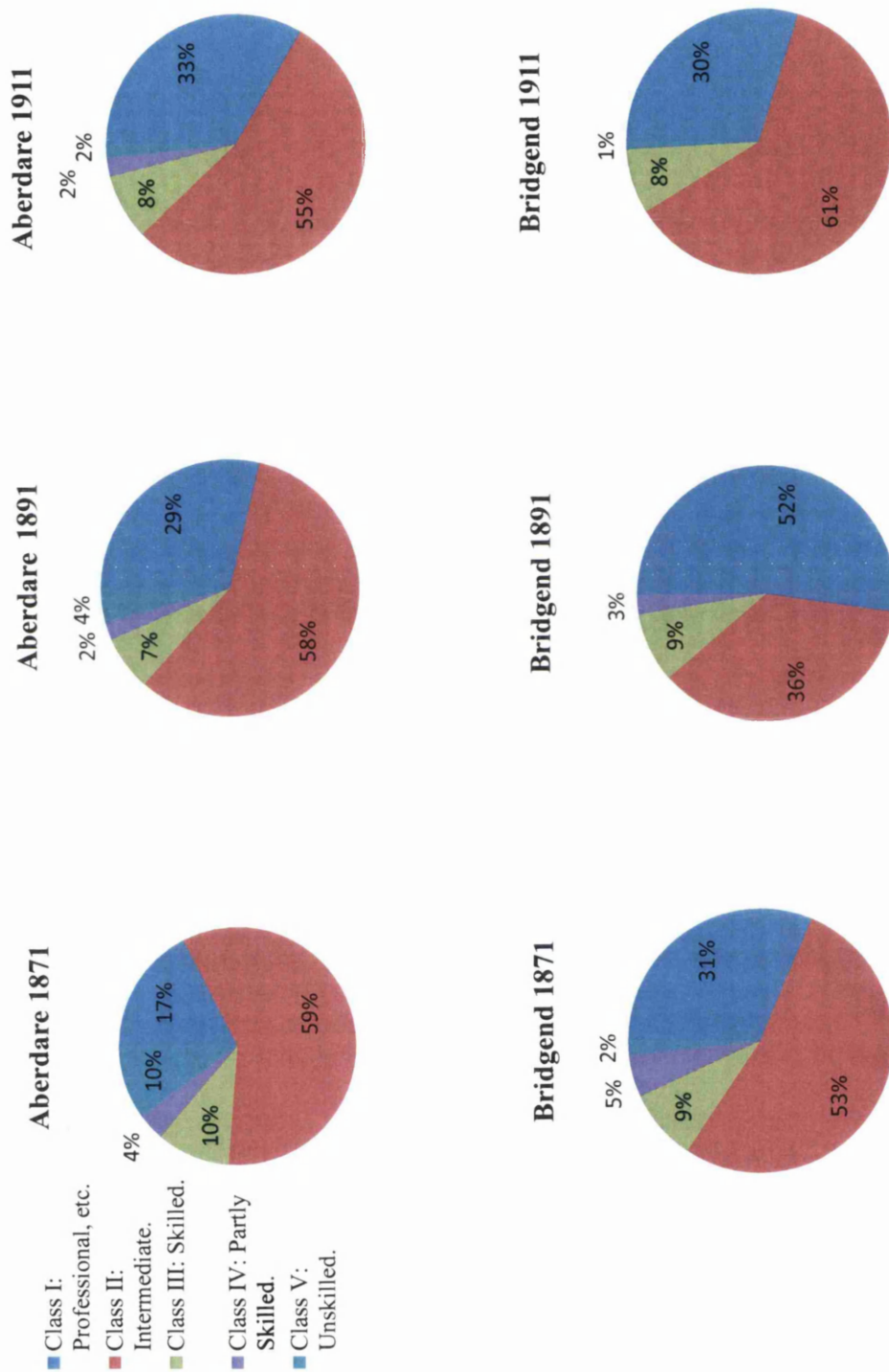
Such accounts demonstrate that greater regulation was not always required and that the servant-employer relationship should not be characterised solely as a site of conflict. Consequently, changes were piece-meal and did not resolve the majority of the underlying tensions in the sector. The failure of both the government and the unions to safeguard either the employers or the servants exacerbated hostilities between servant-keepers and their staff.

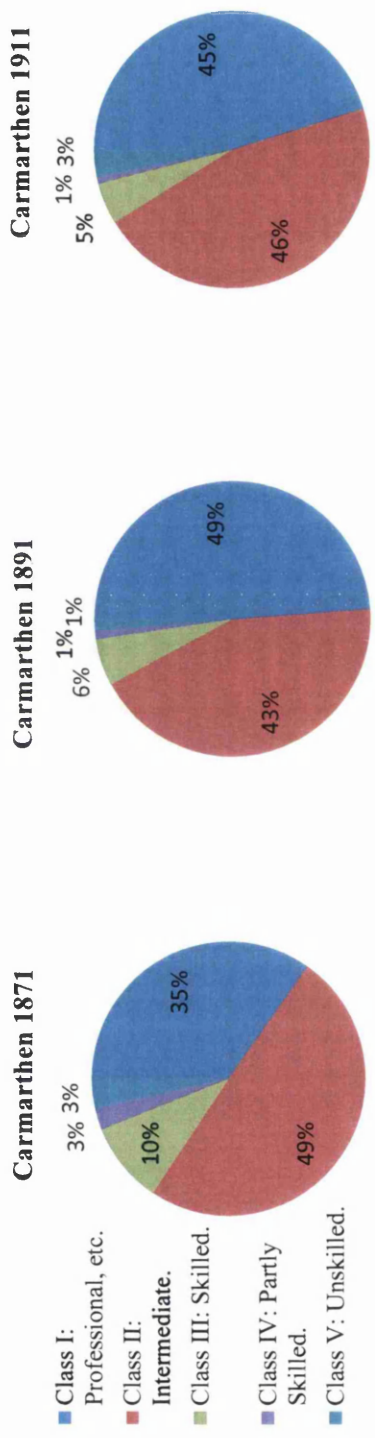
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<sup>63</sup> 'Fair Play For The Servants, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 9 December 1892.



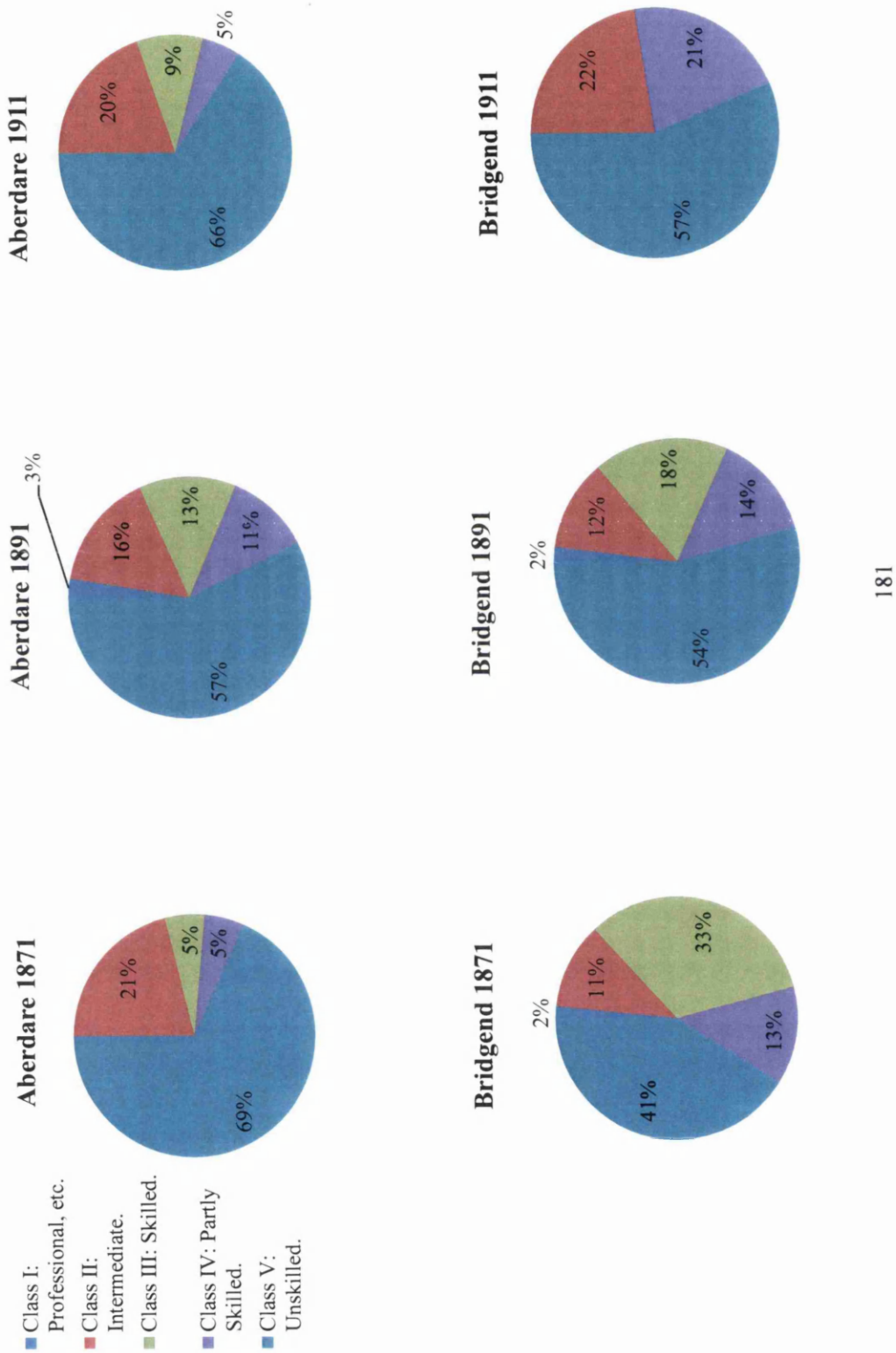
Figure V.I. The occupation of servant-keepers in the three case-study towns (%).



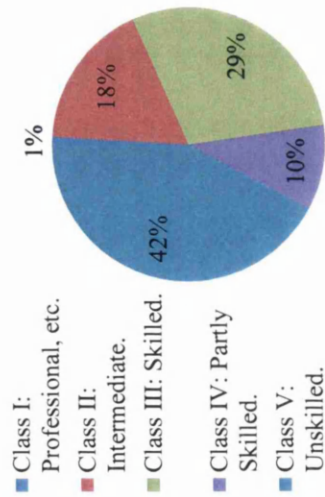


Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1871, 1891 and 1911.*

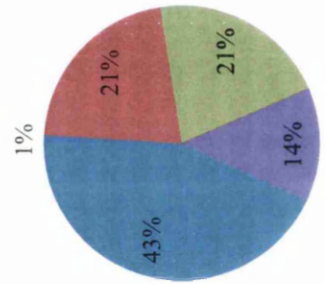
Figure V.II. The parental occupation of domestic servants in the three case-study towns (%).



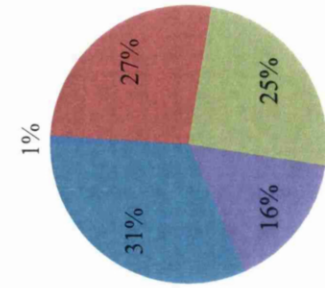
**Carmarthen 1871**



**Carmarthen 1891**



**Carmarthen 1911**



Source: *Census of England and Wales, 1871, 1891 and 1911.*

The lack of regulation in the domestic service industry resulted in an absence of entry standards or minimum wages. This eroded the exclusivity of both employer and servant status and led to a surge in professional protectionism which vilified lower-status householders and their staff. The broad social base from which the servants and employers in south Wales were drawn is discernible in a statistical analysis of the census enumerator books for three case-study towns. It has revealed that approximately 1 in 5 servants sampled originated from parents occupied in class I or II, while 1 in 10 employers originated from the lower three classes. This reveals that householders and domestics did not belong to two distinctive class groups, as there was a noteworthy degree of overlap between their social origins. The sample findings for Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen show that an average of 20 percent, 17 percent and 23 percent of servants respectively had parents engaged in professional and intermediate occupations (see Figure V.I).<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, 16 percent, 12 percent and 11 percent of employers held unskilled, partly skilled or skilled positions as displayed in Figure V.II.<sup>2</sup> Taking into consideration the difficulties surrounding the recording of kin servants, seasonal and casual staff (many of whom were based in less affluent households), and the higher number demonstrated in other studies, it is possible that these findings are somewhat conservative.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, the results indicate that it was in Carmarthen that the servants and employers were most likely to originate from higher status households. This reflects the older and feminised demographic of servant-keepers and the larger proportion of staff occupying posts such as housemaid, ladies maid and companion. Bridgend was the town where class distinctions between domestics and householders were most likely to be adhered to, possessing both the smallest proportion of servants from professional backgrounds and a small proportion of lower-status employers. In contrast, Aberdare with its predominance of heavy industry had a fairly high proportion of partly skilled and even unskilled employer occupations, reflecting the prosperity of the area. The relatively high percentage of middle-class workers engaged in the service industry may also have been the result of the limited respectable options employment opportunities for women in the coalfields.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers', p. 407.

Overall, these results suggest that, in south Wales at least, not all servants originated from working-class backgrounds, nor were the 'servant keeping class' exclusively middle class.<sup>4</sup> This is demonstrated by Winn Anderson in writing 'it seems strange, looking back, to think that even quite ordinarily-placed families like ours were never without a servant or two in those days'.<sup>5</sup> Her account of life in Cardiff's dock area, which she described as 'an area of small working-class homes occupied largely by people who were considered more 'respectable' than the inhabitants of Bute Town', revealed that most of her neighbours retained at least one maid.<sup>6</sup> Although some of her neighbours were distinctively middle-class (doctors, magistrates and stockbrokers), the autobiography reveals a significant social mix with highly blurred class boundaries. Historians have increasingly begun to query the existence of a clear class divide between families and serving staff.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Jan Merchant's study of Dundee has found that at least 13 percent of employers were working-class, and that the industry was a viable option for many daughters and occasionally sons of the bourgeoisie.<sup>8</sup> Likewise, Sian Pooley's research on Lancaster revealed that approximately 40 percent of servants originated from the same economic group as their employers.<sup>9</sup> However, this does not indicate the absence of social difference but rather a need to consider society in terms of 'subtle gradations' rather than distinct groups.<sup>10</sup> The south Wales results therefore confirms the need to move away from the traditional 'upstairs/downstairs' perception of the industry.<sup>11</sup> Even where working-class maids were recruited by higher-class mistresses it was seldom for the purposes of bolstering their image as a 'leisured Victorian lady'.<sup>12</sup> In many cases servants provided much-needed practical assistance to the household and often worked alongside their mistresses.<sup>13</sup> This was especially the case in family

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<sup>4</sup> E. Jordan, *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 36; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 18; Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers', p. 407; E. Higgs, 'Domestic Servants and Households in Victorian England', *Journal of Social History* 8 (1983) p. 201.

<sup>5</sup> Anderson, *A Rather Special Place*, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations', p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids', p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids', p. 112; Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers', p. 407.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 416.

<sup>11</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 253.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers', p. 420.

businesses such as farms and shops where mistresses had duties in both the home and the business and so required additional domestic help with their chores.<sup>14</sup>

The primarily practical need for domestics is demonstrated in the occupational composition of employers. The majority of servants in Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen were engaged in the households of shopkeepers, merchants and dealers (categorised under 'Class II: Intermediate' as specified by Armstrong). The proportion of shopkeeper-employers was highest in Bridgend, where at its peak, just under half of all those who engaged a servant were occupied in retail and commerce. However, they were a notable presence in all three towns, increasing in Bridgend and Carmarthen by ten and eighteen percent between 1871 and 1911. This reflects the role of both towns as commercial centres for their districts and the broader rise of retail during the period. Another occupational group that generally engaged servants as a matter of necessity were the members of the agricultural community. Owing to the urban nature of the census study, the number of sampled employers engaged in farming was very low. Even in more rural Carmarthen, farmers never accounted for more than one percent of employers.<sup>15</sup> However, farm servants frequently featured in qualitative sources suggesting that farmers were important employers of domestics in south Wales as a whole.

Although they seldom feature in the urban census study, they were often discussed in more qualitative sources and appear to have been an important part of the Welsh service industry. The nineteenth-century novelist Allen Raine made rural domestic servants central to her fictional depictions of Welsh life while the American 'travel writer', Wirt Sikes, devoted eleven pages of his 1881 work, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales* to describing the practices of Welsh farm servants and their masters.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, their living conditions were a key cause for concern in the 1867 report from the *Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture*.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, despite their absence from the urban case-study, general farm servants were highly important in the farming community. They

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<sup>14</sup> Mrs Wrigley, 'A Plate-Layer's Wife', in Llewelyn-Davies (eds.), *The Classic Life as We Have Known It*, p. 65. Her account detailed how she often looked after the farmers children for his wife to assist in the farm shop.

<sup>15</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1871, 91 and 11.

<sup>16</sup> W. Sikes, *Rambles and Studies in Old South Wales* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, Rivington, 1881) pp. 194-205.

<sup>17</sup> PP: *Commission on the Employment of Children, Young Persons and Women in Agriculture*.

were also essential to contemporary views of rural Welsh communities as apparent in both official and fictional historical sources. The importance of this category of servant is reflected in the works of historians such as T.M. Devine and Jill Barber that have focused predominantly on farm servants.<sup>18</sup> Their studies have shown that these domestics had an important role in the day to day running of the farms and in the wider communities. The research on employer occupations has demonstrated that employers and servants were not two completely separate groups. This is best seen in the small but notable number of servants, living-out, who retained domestics of their own. Such instances generally occurred where higher status servants such as gardeners and chauffeurs employed young 'maids of all work'. Although infrequent, this occurrence highlights the problematic nature of referring to a self-contained 'servant class' or perceiving servant-keeping as a purely bourgeois activity.<sup>19</sup>

Despite the importance of 'Intermediate' employers, many of whom were merchants and dealers, the professional class had accounted for an increasing proportion of employers in south Wales. This may be attributed to the changing occupational character of the industry. Positions in affluent households and non-residential establishments were the most sought after by workers. Therefore, more modest employers, such as domestics themselves, experienced the greatest difficulty recruiting live-in staff. Consequently, lower income employers would have been amongst the first to relinquish the employer status or to rely on casual and part-time labour. These positions often went unrecorded by census enumerators and may account for the decline in the proportion of lower status employers in the towns' data. The increased proportion of professional employers was particularly true of Carmarthen and Bridgend where 49 and 52 percent of servant-keepers respectively were recorded as occupying professional roles in 1891. The 'professionals' group generally consisted of individuals engaged in the administrative, legal and medical sectors. Class I occupations also included householders of 'private means', such as those individuals in receipt of an annuity or living off an unspecified form of unearned income. They comprised only a small proportion of servant-employers as

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<sup>18</sup> T. M. Devine, *Farm Servants and Labour in Lowland Scotland 1770-1914* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd, 1984), pp. 98-123; J. Barber, 'Stolen Goods: The Sexual Harassment of Female Servants in West Wales during the Nineteenth-century' in *Rural History* 4 (1993) pp.123-136 on p. 123-133.

<sup>19</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 18; Jordan, *The Women's Movement*, p. 36; Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations', p. 192.



was especially the case in Bridgend. They were, however, most notable in Carmarthen, owing to the older population demographic in the town resulting in a higher level of residents receiving pensions or living off personal savings.<sup>20</sup> Those classified as 'private means' engaged a significant number of companions, nurses and ladies maids. These roles were designed to offer personal assistance and appeared to be particularly associated with the sick and the elderly.<sup>21</sup> In the absence of modern day home helps and residential care, domestic servants provided practical help to those in need and in possession of the sufficient funds. Such employers were often the most synonymous with the engagement of servants and fall soundly into the middle class.<sup>22</sup>

The number of servants engaged by 'Class I' employers was largely governed by personal wealth and preference. While affluent individuals opted not to engage domestic labour others retained as many as they could comfortably afford. This is evident in the lack of correlation between family size and the number of staff retained. If each household only retained staff according to their practical requirements, larger families would have employed a larger number of staff than smaller households. This was not the case. For obvious reasons publicans and hoteliers employed the largest number, with an average of 3.7 servants in each establishment sampled. However, farmers, another category that would often require practical assistance in the homestead only engaged only 1.3 servants. Yet, landowners and professionals hired 3.1 and 2.4 workers respectively. This is despite many often having smaller families than those employed as tradesmen (1.4 servants per household) or manual workers (1.1 servants per household). These results reflect contemporary guidelines, published by writers such as Isabella Beeton, that tradesmen should have one maid while professionals should aim to retain at least three.<sup>23</sup> Very few families or businesses in south Wales engaged more than three members of domestic staff, suggesting that personal wealth continued to play a significant role in governing the number of servants each family retained. However, Bridget Hill has cautioned against attempting to connect the number of servants retained in any one house to the wealth of the householder or the size of their family.

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<sup>20</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>21</sup> *The Census of England and Wales*, Aberdare, Bridgend and Carmarthen, 1871, 1891 and 1911.

<sup>22</sup> Jordan, *The Women's Movement*. p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, pp. 18 and 20.

Rather a complex range of factors determined the presence of staff such as ‘the nature and age of the household members, the particular and changing needs of the household, [and] the way of life of the family’.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the increased proportion of elite and professional employers, lower-status householders and servant continued to be vilified and were blamed for the worst excesses of the industry. A Newport maid complained that ‘mistresses used to respect their servants and were looked up to in return, but such mistresses now are few and far between. There are so many “ladies” who have been domestics themselves that we cannot expect them to make good mistresses’.<sup>25</sup> This extract alludes to several issues that need closer examination. Firstly, her claim that relations between servants and householders had deteriorated owing to the influx of lower status persons was a belief held by a number of her contemporaries. For instance, a Cardiff mistress described how ‘servants nowadays, are not to be compared to the honest and industrious workers of a few years ago’.<sup>26</sup> This account chimes with the argument of Frank Huggett’s *Life Below Stairs*, in arguing that the nineteenth-century saw an intensification in servant-employer relationship problems as there had ‘never been so many indignant and complaining mistresses or so many resentful and demanding servants’.<sup>27</sup> However, other historians have claimed that there was never a golden age of the service relationship as conflict had always existed.<sup>28</sup>

The Newport maid also revealed that status was as important to servants as it was to employers. They were also as hostile to developments that proved detrimental to their professional status. This is echoed in Dawes’ claim that ‘servants themselves were extremely rank conscious and jealously guarded their positions’.<sup>29</sup> Many domestics took their status from that of their employers so that it formed the basis of their own sense of identity.<sup>30</sup> The Newport servants also linked social status to employer quality, displaying some resentment against mistresses that had previously been in service themselves. While this evidence reinforces the point that servants and

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<sup>24</sup> Hill, *Servants*, p. 252.

<sup>25</sup> ‘A Servant, Newport’, *Western Mail*, 5 December 1892.

<sup>26</sup> ‘Mistress, Cardiff’, *Western Mail*, 3 December 1892.

<sup>27</sup> F. E. Huggett, *Life Below Stairs: Domestic Servants in England from Victorian Times* (London: John Murray, 1977), p. 146.

<sup>28</sup> J. J. Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul Ltd, 1956), p. 77; Hill, *Servants*, p. 38.

<sup>29</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Hecht, *The Domestic Servant Class*, p. 37.

employers were not two completely distinct groups, it also suggests that social mobility was not universally welcomed by the workforce. The harshest employers were often said to belong to the lower orders as they struggled the most to maintain a divide between themselves and their servants.<sup>31</sup> Lower status employers also found it more difficult to elicit the same level respect or deference from their staff as many wealthier families.<sup>32</sup> Other maids described their less affluent mistresses as ‘half-trained ladies’ with ‘no idea of housekeeping, but a good idea how to dress’.<sup>33</sup> A housemaid from the Rhondda Valley claimed that ‘so-called ladies who have just jumped up do not know how to treat a servant’.<sup>34</sup> As Huggett suggests conflict was often the result of the inexperienced middle-classes in dealing with servants, rendering the ‘servant problem’ more of an ‘employer problem’.<sup>35</sup> However, one correspondent calling herself ‘A Non Unionist’ claimed, ‘I noticed that the complaints do not come so much from those who live in wealthy houses, where there is more than enough and to spare, but from those who give assistance to mistresses with very limited incomes who must manage economically in order to pay their way honourably’.<sup>36</sup> Although this also suggests that relationships were more fraught in lower income households, it attributes the trend to the hardships induced by limited resources rather than inexperienced or socially insecure employers.

The lack of central regulation resulted in the absence of set working conditions. An article on the ‘domestic service question’ from 1900 makes a direct connection between the lack of regulation, poor working conditions and the tensions often present in the employer-servant relationship. It states that:

in no department of life, probably, is so much friction observable as between mistresses and female servants. Both sides, no doubt, are at fault, but much of it spring from the fact that the duties which thousands of girls are expected to perform are not defined when they are engaged. If the new movement [Domestic Servants’ Union] will do nothing more than simplify matters in this respect it will do something to justify its existence.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 38.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> ‘A Swansea Servant’, *Western Mail*, 12 December 1892; ‘A Poor Servant, Cardiff’, *Western Mail*, 1 December 1892.

<sup>34</sup> ‘Housemaid, Rhondda Valley’, *Western Mail*, 9 December 1892.

<sup>35</sup> Huggett, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 146.

<sup>36</sup> ‘A Non Unionist, Cardiff’, *Western Mail*, 21 December 1892.

<sup>37</sup> ‘The Domestic Servant Question’, *Western Mail*, 4 September 1900.

Therefore, the need to regulate and clarify the conditions of service was perceived by some contemporaries as a method of defusing tension and remedying problems in the industry. The lack of regulation rendered both servants and their employers vulnerable as they dependent on one another.<sup>38</sup> It is evident from the pseudonyms of those who corresponded with the *Western Mail* that both maids and mistresses felt themselves to be the injured parties. Many servants signed off as 'A Poor Slavey' or 'Another Poor Old Slave'.<sup>39</sup> 'Justice' and 'fair play' were another two reoccurring themes amongst the letters.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile, the pseudonyms of employers suggested that they perceived themselves to be 'victims' often using descriptions such as 'deceived' when signing off.

Both servants and employers were exposed to a number of dangers through their connection with the domestic service industry. Servants were vulnerable to a number of issues such as exploitation, harsh treatment and abuse. Research on domestic service have highlighted the susceptibility of servants to sexual abuse in particular. Studies such as Jill Barber's 'Stolen Goods: The Sexual Harassment of Female Servants in West Wales during the Nineteenth-Century' exclusively deals with this theme, while many monographs on servants devote substantial page space to the topic.<sup>41</sup> Although upper-class employers are most commonly associated with servant seduction, Barber's study of farm servants in West Wales has demonstrated that local boys posed more of a threat than employers.<sup>42</sup> Nothing is mentioned of sexual exploitation in the published letters. However, the admission records of the Salvation Army 'Receiving Home', in Moira Terrace Cardiff, provide numerous accounts of pregnant young girls being swiftly dismissed by their employers.<sup>43</sup> A typical record provided a brief biography of each girl on entering and then a summary of the girl's progress while at the home. As suggested by Barber, their predicament was seldom attributed to their masters. For instance, 24 year old Minnie Eastbrook entered the

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<sup>38</sup> Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers', p. 425.

<sup>39</sup> 'A Poor Slavey', *Western Mail*, 3 December 1892; 'Another Poor Old Slave', *Western Mail*, 10 December 1892.

<sup>40</sup> 'A Servant Who Loves Justice', *Western Mail*, 8 December 1892; 'A Lover of Fair Play', *Western Mail*, 14 December 1892.

<sup>41</sup> J. Barber, 'Stolen Goods: The Sexual Harassment of Female Servants in West Wales during the Nineteenth-century', *Rural History* 4 (1993), pp.123-136; also see Hill, *Servants*, chapter 3 'The Sexual Vulnerability and Sexuality of Female Domestic Servants', pp. 44-63; and Turner, *What the Butler Saw*, chapter 4 'Virtue in Danger', pp. 56- 70.

<sup>42</sup> Barber, 'Stolen Goods', p.128; Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 45; Hill, *Servants*, p. 50.

<sup>43</sup> SAIHCA: Cardiff Receiving Home Admission Forms.

Receiving Home after moving from Birmingham to Bath and then to Cardiff in search of work. Described as 'a quiet and lonely girl, her mother died when she was five years old, soon after her father committed suicide, while in a situation she went for a walk with a young man who seduced her. [She] had to leave her place and enter the Union [workhouse] for confinement'.<sup>44</sup> The account continued that she 'came to us with her child, but soon had to take it back to the Union where it died'. Within five months of entering the home Minnie was found a new position in Roath.<sup>45</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether the industry rendered the servants vulnerable to sexual exploitation or, as the largest employer of young women in Britain, it stands to reason that domestic servants would account for the largest proportion of illegitimate births.

In Britain sexual exploitation was a very low level occurrence although many incidents would have gone undocumented.<sup>46</sup> However, beyond sexual exploitation, domestic servants were also vulnerable to poor working conditions, quick dismissal, false accusations, mistrust and loss of references. Meanwhile, mistresses feared theft, gossip, wastefulness, intrusion into privacy, incompetence and desertion. Many of these problems were repeatedly raised in the newspaper's editorial columns. These manifested themselves differently amongst the employers and the workforce and had a significant impact on relations between the two groups. Restricted personal freedom was a prominent issue in both secondary texts and in the primary material. One servant detailed how 'we - poor unprotected ones - are compelled to do as they [employers] please. We are expected to rise at an early hour, work hard all day, and not go to rest until, in many cases, midnight...we are not allowed to wear what we like, and in many families we would not be allowed to go to church but for appearances.'<sup>47</sup> Another claimed that:

servants, as a general rule, are treated more as though they were machines than human beings who have feelings... I lived once where the servants were only allowed out once every Sunday, and then were supposed to attend Church ... and were obliged to return home as soon as the service was over... She [the mistress] considered it a great crime for a servant to speak to a young man, let alone go for a walk with one.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers', p. 422.

<sup>47</sup> 'A Poor Servant, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 1 December 1892.

<sup>48</sup> 'Housemaid, Rhondda Valley', *Western Mail*, 9 December 1892.

Such restrictions were largely viewed as evidence of employer control, yet they may also have been the attempt of over-zealous mistresses at protecting servants from the fate of Minnie Eastbrook.<sup>49</sup> The young demographic of the 'live-in' workforce resulted in many employers effectively finding themselves in *loco parentis* for children as young as twelve. For some this manifested itself as paternalism. One maid revealed that, 'my mistresses have always treated me very kindly. With one exception, I have been treated as one of the family... I have been in my present place nine months, and I am sure no girl could wish for a better mistress or a more comfortable home. I live as she lives, and am treated with every kindness and consideration'.<sup>50</sup> However, relationships could be adversely affected by the notion of employer responsibility for the behaviour and general well-being of their staff. These extracts provide examples of the terms of service, described by Todd as 'draconian measures', aimed to control and restrict.<sup>51</sup> By enforcing such harsh codes mistresses risked accusations of tyranny and ultimately a high turnover of staff. However, where personal freedoms were permitted and transgressions occurred, the mistresses were considered as having failed in their duty of 'moral guardianship' to their young maids.<sup>52</sup> The situation also facilitated those householders who sought to abuse their authority and contributed to the preference of many domestics for institutional posts where hours, duties and conditions of service were more assured.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, gaining the correct balance between consideration and regulation was a significant dilemma for many employers.

Yet it must be noted that despite the often harsh conditions, in comparison to their contemporaries in other industries the conditions of service, especially for those in more senior positions, appear favourable. As one working housekeeper explained 'I think they (servants) are far better off than the shop assistants. They have lodging,

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<sup>49</sup> Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant*, p. 103.

<sup>50</sup> 'Another Servant, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 8 December 1892; McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 24.

<sup>51</sup> Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations', p. 200.

<sup>52</sup> J. Giles, 'Authority, Dependence and Power in Accounts of Twentieth-Century Domestic Service' in L. Delap, et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), p. 209; S. Beal, 'Changing the Reading of Victorian Maids' in A. Capet, *The Representation of Working People in Britain and France: New Perspectives* (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2009) pp.73-80 on p. 80.

<sup>53</sup> M. Higgs, *Tracing Your Servant Ancestors: A Guide for Family Historians* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Books Ltd, 2012), p. 22.

washing, board, and wages without a long walk home in all weathers'.<sup>54</sup> Michael Patterson's study of country house staff has also urged caution in studying domestic service as to the modern mindset 'much about a servant's life seems intolerable, but while there is no denying that it was a harsh and unrewarding life, we must not project into the past our twenty-first century expectations'. While modern society feels 'entitled to personal fulfilment, education, satisfaction, leisure, material comfort, foreign travel and a wealth of entertainment... for those who did not have any such expectations a life in service was often the norm'.<sup>55</sup>

The debate that unfolded in the editorial columns of the *Western Mail* in 1892 reveals that employers, as a collective, were under public scrutiny. This was indicative of the social critique individual mistresses were often exposed to in their communities during this period. The engagement of servants rendered the private sphere of the home significantly more public.<sup>56</sup> In many ways mistresses were as confined by their status as their servants. As domestic staff were able to view behind closed doors into the private realm of family life, they acquired the power to injure the family's reputation through gossip and allegations, false or otherwise. The willingness of servants to disclose the details of their employers' home life is evident in the correspondence. Instances of poor conduct, drunkenness and even hypochondria are all revealed. One Swansea mistress, for instance, was described as being 'seldom sober... doing little else but bully her servants morning, noon and night. She is seldom from the kitchen more than half an hour at a time. If she is gone longer, her servants know she is lying down, simply because it is impossible for her to stand up'.<sup>57</sup> Although the correspondence was largely anonymous, it may be claimed that if maids were willing to write to the local press about their experiences they were probably happy to talk about them to friends and family. This is evident in the oral testimony of Bessie Hopkins who described how she resolved the issue of not being given enough food to eat by her employers:

They were very light on food. It was only what they put on my plate that I was having, no seconds, nothing at all like that. Well now, my sister working in another part of Mumbles, I was in Langland Road and she, I don't know what

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<sup>54</sup> 'A Working Housekeeper', *Western Mail*, 13 December 1892.

<sup>55</sup> M. Patterson, *Private Life in Britain's Stately Homes: Masters and Servants in the Golden Age* (London: Constable and Robinson Ltd, 2012), pp. 162-3.

<sup>56</sup> J. Flanders, *The Victorian House* (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), p. xxvi.

<sup>57</sup> 'One Who Speaks From Experience, Swansea', *Western Mail*, 6 December 1892.

the other part was called, and I always used to be hungry. Well, I was young you see wasn't I. Well I used to tell my sister about it and she told her mistress. So she came over one day and she wanted to see my mistress and she told her that I was young and healthy and that I should have more food... so anyway she used to ask me sometimes, only sometimes, if I wanted anything for seconds.<sup>58</sup>

Bessie's testimony reveals the way that private practices of the home were often made public, exposing mistresses to public scrutiny. Delap has noted that service could be as restrictive for employers as their staff, forcing them to curtail their behaviour as well as their speech in front of their maids.<sup>59</sup> Therefore, the social requirement of maintaining a respectable household placed considerable pressure on mistresses. The lack of privacy effectively opened up the private sphere to the public gaze, rendering mistresses as vulnerable to social stigma as their employees.

Mistrust and suspicion also featured prominently in the testimony of servants, with locked cupboards and overly thrifty employers forming frequent complaints.<sup>60</sup> A significant area of contention was food, particularly its storage, quality and amount. An ex-maid of fifteen years service lamented how 'even the bread was locked away' in one of the households and suspicions were raised if a pint of milk could not be made to stretch to the household's breakfast as well as a milk pudding.<sup>61</sup> A Llanelli servant, meanwhile, recounted how one of her mistresses, 'walked calmly into the kitchen one morning and called me a thief, as I dared to cut from their joint on Sunday, meat for the servants' dinner, instead of warming a hash, she called it, which had been made before I entered the house'.<sup>62</sup> These extracts are representative of a number of accounts published in the *Western Mail*. While many mistresses defended the quality of the meals they provided for their staff, the rationing of supplies appears to have centred on the fear of theft and the avoidance of wastefulness. In reply to servant complaints of locked pantries, a mistress told of how she 'began by leaving everything open till the cook got drunk on my wine and spirits'.<sup>63</sup> Another correspondent, recounted how a cook of her acquaintance provided 'food of the best quality, such as butter, eggs, puddings, meat, etc, and

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<sup>58</sup> SWML: AUD 482, 'Women's' Work Experiences in the Swansea Valley', Audio Recordings.

<sup>59</sup> Delap, 'Kitchen Sink Laughter', p. 646.

<sup>60</sup> 'A Sympathetic Servant, Llanelli', *Western Mail*, 15 December 1892; 'A Mother, Bristol', *Western Mail*, 5 December 1892.

<sup>61</sup> 'A Mother, Bristol', *Western Mail*, 5 December 1892.

<sup>62</sup> 'A Sympathetic Servant, Llanelli', *Western Mail*, 15 December 1892.

<sup>63</sup> 'A Country Matron, Cardiff', *Western Mail*, 9 December 1892.



oftentimes bottles of spirits' to a policeman she held a fondness for.<sup>64</sup> Meanwhile, 'A Deceived Mistress' from Pembrokeshire, told of her family's dismay as 'this week we discovered the housemaid - a girl of sixteen - to whom I gave £9 wages, and had undertaken to train in housework, was robbing us right and left, and, when discovered, actually burnt a quantity of things stolen in the kitchen stove rather than restore them' (see appendix two).<sup>65</sup>

Such incidents, however infrequent, compounded the sense of vulnerability many employers felt at taking a stranger into their homes, often without a reliable method of ascertaining their true character. Frugality was another reason for limiting access to household supplies. In some homes the practice may have been extreme and unnecessary given the wealth of the employers. However, for households of a more modest nature, low income necessitated thrift and dictated the material conditions that many servants were compelled to endure. As argued by one *Western Mail* correspondent who wrote under the pseudonym of 'Pater', those most frequently accused of miserliness were 'people who have to do with one maid-of-all-work, who, very possibly, that is, the wives, do half the work themselves, and who give the servants the same food as themselves, but are obliged to be always on the look-out to check any waste, for economic reasons'.<sup>66</sup> Pater's letter does not give the impression that more humble households were overstretching themselves to keep a maid for status purposes, as suggested by McBride, but owing to the practical need for domestic assistance.<sup>67</sup> Such an analysis suggests that economic realities were a major determinant of the quality of employer-employee relations and working conditions.

Cultural divides also held the potential to intensify friction in the servant-employer relationship. The lack of regulation meant that mistresses could impose their own sanctions on servant behaviour. While in reality issues such as religion, ethnicity and language had only a limited impact, in a Welsh context, it received significant attention in the national press and in other contemporary publications. The sense of professional protectionism was not solely concerned with social status but also incorporated ethnic stereotypes. While there has been little evidence of such

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<sup>64</sup> 'One Who Is Neither Mistress Nor Servant', *Western Mail*, 20 December 1892.

<sup>65</sup> 'A Deceived Mistress, Pembrokeshire', *Western Mail*, 12 December 1892.

<sup>66</sup> 'Pater, Pembrokeshire', *Western Mail*, 8 December 1892.

<sup>67</sup> McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, p. 50.

a distinctive ethnic hierarchy as established in America, the issue had the power to spark debate in Britain as occurred in 1882. This was largely the result of insecurities surrounding the ethnic position of both Welsh and Irish servants in Britain. A Cardiff correspondent signing himself 'A Taffy' wrote a scathing article about the status of Irish servants in America.<sup>68</sup> The correspondent stated 'I know for a fact that Irish girls frequently tried to pass themselves off as English, Welsh, or Scotch to obtain situations, as even many Irish families prefer persons of almost any nationality to their own as servants'.<sup>69</sup> This provoked a backlash from a number of people not only in defending the Irish maids but also criticising Welsh servants. A few days after the initial article 'Anti-Welsher' from Sheffield wrote that 'as hotel keeper [I] have engaged almost as many "helps" in my time as "Taffy", but I have never met with a single instance of Irish girls repudiating their nationality. As for passing themselves off as *Welsh*, heaven forbid! That would be a fall indeed. I could sooner expect them to prefer being known as Hottentots'.<sup>70</sup>

The subsequent argument that played out in the correspondence columns of *The Sporting Times* reflected the impact of national insecurities and stereotypes on the service industry. The prejudice against maids demonstrated in the newspaper articles was also partly the result of the competition between Irish and Welsh servants for the best domestic positions available.<sup>71</sup> This is made clear in an article published in *The Liverpool Mercury* in 1897, where it was claimed that 'according to the principal registries, the fashion [for Welsh servants] has changed, partly owing, we regret to say to the unveracity which too often distinguishes Welsh girls, and their Irish Catholic rivals are growing in favour'.<sup>72</sup> The charge of 'unveracity', once again reflects the continuing impact of the Blue Books on public perceptions of welsh servants and women more generally.<sup>73</sup> The prejudice against the Irish has been attributed to myriad of complex issues such as their sizeable presence in England and

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<sup>68</sup> A Taffy, 'Biddy in America', *The Sporting Times*, 1 February 1882.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Anti-Welsher, 'Biddy in America', *The Sporting Times*, 13 February 1882; 'Hottentot' was an offensive term for Khoikhoi people of Africa.

<sup>71</sup> E. Jones, 'Victorian Heyday' in Jones, E. (ed.) *The Welsh in London 1500-2000* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), p. 122.

<sup>72</sup> 'Special Welsh Notes', *Liverpool Mercury*, 10 April 1897. The word 'unveracity' was a nineteenth-century term seemingly no longer in use meaning dishonest, *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com), [accessed 20 December 2012].

<sup>73</sup> G. T. Roberts, *The Language of the Blue Books: The Perfect Instrument of Empire* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1998), p. 3.

Wales, the potency of their cultural institutions and the construction of the 'Irish Catholic Other' in opposition to Britishness.<sup>74</sup> The article also demonstrates that Welsh and Irish maids were perceived, at least in some quarters, to be rivals in the domestic service labour market and that nationality had a degree of influence over the desirability of individual servants in Britain.

*The Sporting Times* discussion indicates that a degree of insecurity was felt about the social perception of the Welsh and Irish migrants. The fact that such sentiments were focused on servants shows that the engagement of domestics was for many people the main site of interaction with Irish or Welsh migrant workers. Domestic service brought householders into close contact not just with people of a different class but also of different nationality. It is known that servants were increasingly difficult to source leading to the entry of many unqualified and inexperienced staff into the industry. The inevitable failure of some maids to meet their employers often exacting standards was readily blamed on their place of birth. In contrast to the idea that the Irish were subversive, the Welsh servants were viewed as being of substandard quality. This was not just apparent in the contact between Welsh migrants and English householders but also between English servants and their Welsh employers in Wales. A mistress from Pembrokeshire recounted her experience with one English servant who she nursed through sickness for six months only for her to give notice as soon as her health improved.<sup>75</sup> Before leaving she was said to have told her mistress that she 'hated Wales. The fact is, being English, she thought she was far above Welsh people generally, and at one time hinted that she should like to have a bedroom and sitting-room to herself, as she disliked sharing rooms with a Welsh girl'.<sup>76</sup> Whatever the truth of the situation, the fact that employers, both in England and Wales assigned their staff problems to nationality demonstrates that while it did not serve as a complete barrier, it did hold the potential to heighten the tension in the household, especially when servants felt they were being unjustly treated.

Servant cultural identity did intensify relations in some households, while a very small minority of employers refused to employ servants of a different

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<sup>74</sup> Hickman and Walter, 'Deconstructing Whiteness', *Feminist Review* 50 (1995) pp. 8-9.

<sup>75</sup> 'A Deceived Mistress', *Western Mail*, 1 December 1892.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

faith. Prejudice, fear and the need to portray a respectable veneer lead some mistresses to avoid hiring certain individuals while others sought to subdue or alter the cultural identity of their staff.<sup>77</sup> Religion played a significant role in the mistress and maid relationship as it was the most acceptable way of occupying a maid's leisure hours and helped to maintain employer control as it reinforced the notion of a divinely ordained social order with the promise of heavenly rewards for the obedient.<sup>78</sup> As a letter to the editor of the *Western Mail* illustrated, 'one consolation' was that 'our mistresses won't be favoured with a higher stand than their servants in the next life'.<sup>79</sup> Attempts to control servant habits could, however, cause resentment. One servant from Penarth lamented the interference of employers in their free time arguing, 'I have always had more dislike for Sundays than for any other day in the week. I doubt if we should be let out to Church at all if it was not to suit their pride. Why should not servants be paid for overtime as well as other working-classes?'<sup>80</sup> Other, personal testimony also revealed that Sundays were felt to be as strenuous as weekdays. Lady Llanover's young maid, Margaret Mostyn Jones recollected how she attended a religious service three times on a Sunday. After returning home from chapel at one o'clock to prepare lunch she then had to go to church for a 'welsh service' at three o'clock. In the evening there was also a meeting in Llanover Chapel as well as evening prayer being read in the front hall of the house, by Lady Llanover, at which all servants were expected to attend. Margaret concluded that 'all this was not very encouraging for me to think to attend regularly'.<sup>81</sup> These examples suggest that while some employers attempted to shape the cultural and intellectual lives of their staff their efforts were not always successful and in some cases had the opposite effect to that desired.

As well as religious conformity, Lady Llanover also required her household staff to speak Welsh and follow 'customs' such as wearing Welsh national dress.<sup>82</sup> Her enthusiasm for Wales and her habit of inflicting her unusual notions on her servants was so extensive she even included it in her last will and testament before her death in 1889. She instructed 'her trustees to have none but Protestant Welsh-

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<sup>77</sup> L. Davidoff, and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle-class 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson Education, 1987), p. 392.

<sup>78</sup> Turner, *What the Butler Saw*, p.193.

<sup>79</sup> 'A Servant', *Western Mail*, 23 December 1892.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> NLW: MS 23511A, Journal of Margaret Mostyn Jones, 1861.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

speaking tenants of farms. She directed that her trustees should keep up and provide the necessary servants for two Welsh and one London mansion... she also directed them to employ Protestant Welsh-speaking servants, and not of the Roman Catholic religion'.<sup>83</sup> The will's complexity was partly the result of her effectively disinheriting her daughter, Hon. Augusta Herbert, permitting only her residence at the houses and an £80 a week allowance. Instead, the estate was placed in trust for her granddaughter 'if a Trinitarian Protestant' in adulthood. The clauses on religion and language suggest that Augusta failed to share her mother's view of servant governance. Like the tensions over lady-helps that existed between Lady Rose Mary Crawshay and her daughter at Cyfarthfa Castle. The Llanover case demonstrates that, even between mother and daughter ideas on servant keeping and styles of household management varied greatly. In many regards, a servant's cultural identity and the enforcement of cultural barriers was at the mercy of individual employers.

While some householders sought to encourage a distinctive Welsh identity amongst their domestic servants a few hoped to eliminate it. One English mistress with relatives in Wales, Jennett Humphreys, wrote to *The Times* in 1879 describing her dislike of bilingualism in Wales.<sup>84</sup> She felt that 'the Welsh better classes' should particularly 'encourage the learning of English among their servants' as 'this is not done at present everywhere. There is great convenience in having your servants unable to understand what is passing with your English guests, and having your English guests unable to understand what you say in Welsh to your Welsh servants'.<sup>85</sup> Her letter not only reveals that in many instances bilingualism was an asset, but that it was considered acceptable for employers to influence the cultural characteristics of their staff. It is difficult to gauge just how representative her claims were of wider society. Yet, her views reflect the opinions propagated by the Blue Books.<sup>86</sup> The notorious 1847 report 'helped to consolidate negative attitudes towards the Welsh language' and promoted Anglicization.<sup>87</sup> Even the use of what she termed 'bardic' names was criticised.<sup>88</sup> Jennett's correspondence and Margaret Mostyn

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<sup>83</sup> 'Law Report: RE. Baroness Llanover Herbert v. Freshfield', *The Times*, 21 March 1903.

<sup>84</sup> Jennett Humphreys, 'The Welsh Language', *The Times*, 13 September 1879.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> H. Roberts, 'Embodying Identity: Class, Nation and Corporeality in the 1847 Blue Books Report', *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, 3 (2003) p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> 'Bardic names' may have referred to Welsh Christian names generally or the adoption of pseudonyms as originally done by bards or poets. The census enumerators' books suggest that the vast

Jones' Journal, therefore, both reveal that employers often had significant influence over the cultural lifestyles of their staff, whether in promoting or discouraging aspects of their Welsh ethnic identity.

Yet, transformations in the cultural identities of servants were not always the result of employers trying to mould or control their workforce. Change was sometimes the result of servant mimicry of their employers or, in the case of migrants, natural assimilation into the host culture. However short the distance, relocating was a significant event in the lives of many servants and a move that would have provided a large contrast to their home communities. As one ex-maid, Mrs Smith recounted in testimony published in an anthology of working-class women's writing (compiled by the Women's Co-operative Guild in 1931), 'I am a native of Cardiff and went to service up the Rhondda where I had a brother working...As a town-bred girl I found the life very different from what I had been used to'.<sup>89</sup> Despite the attention given to the role of mimicry in secondary studies, little supporting evidence has been discovered on this in south Wales. However, the novels of Allen Raine are particularly effective at showing how some servants in Wales often copied the cultural attributes of their employers in the hope of personal betterment. This is most evident in the adoption of the English language by servants when talking to higher status characters. In *By Berwen Banks*, the old manservant, Shoni, was said to be 'proud of his proficiency' in English, yet his grasp of the language was presented as somewhat less than fluent as he commands another character, Gwynne Ellis, to 'keep to the English if that is your language, cos me is spoke English as well as Welsh'.<sup>90</sup> Although revealing that some domestics equated Anglicisation with self improvement, the novel generally suggests that the adoption of English was entirely voluntary for many servants and not forced upon them by their employers. This reflects the true-life case of Margaret Mostyn Jones. Despite being heavily encouraged by her employer to speak Welsh, English was her language

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majority of servants in south Wales had English, often Biblical, names such as Mary, Rachel and Elizabeth.

<sup>89</sup> F. H. Smith, 'In a Mining Village' in M. Llewelyn Davies (ed.), *Life As We Have Known It: The Voices of Working-Class Women*, (London: Virago Press, 2012) p. 74.

<sup>90</sup> A. Raine, *By Berwen Banks* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1907), pp. 49-50, and 92.

of choice when writing her journal.<sup>91</sup> Therefore, speaking English was certainly highly valued asset for many domestics.

Raine, herself, despite the fact she chose to write in English, was fairly scathing about the lack of value some people placed on Welsh culture and language. In describing Gwynne Ellis, she claims how he endeavoured to speak:

in his mother tongue, with that hesitation and indistinctness common to the dwellers in the counties bordering upon England, and to the 'would-be genteel' of too many other parts of Wales, who perfectly unconscious of the beauty of their own language, and ignorant of its literature, affect English manners and customs, and often pretend that English is more familiar to them than Welsh, a fatuous course of conduct which brings upon them only the sarcasm of the lower classes, and the contempt of the more educated.<sup>92</sup>

However, Raine's disapproval was directed at the middle-class Ellis and not Shoni, who was treated as a comic figure, although both clearly valued English more than Welsh. Perhaps she found it difficult to blame the uneducated Shoni for copying his social betters in a bid for self-improvement. The fact he seldom spoke English to his equals and that his efforts were normally in vain may have led him to be perceived as posing little true threat to Welsh culture. However, Raine appears to suggest that people of Ellis's status should have been wise enough to know better.

The issue of language mimicry resurfaces in another of Allen Raine's novels, *The Welsh Singer*. The notion that servants tried to ape their employers through speaking English is first mentioned briefly in the description of a minor character, a hall servant Owen Pritchard. Raine writes that 'like most of the domestics connected with a large establishment in Wales, he thought it his bounden duty always to express himself in English, though his knowledge of the language was very limited'.<sup>93</sup> This very much reflects the description of Shoni and we gain the impression that some servants tried to distinguish themselves from the rest of the working-class through the adoption of English, using it as a badge of status. The only time, however that speaking Welsh is presented as a problem in Raine's novel is when the story's heroine Mifanwy first enters the employ of the Pomfrey family. During their first meeting, Mrs Pomfrey exclaims 'she'd never do for me with that gibberish she talks. What do I want with a foreigner? I don't want no one as can't speak the English

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<sup>91</sup> NLW: Journal of Margaret Mostyn Jones.

<sup>92</sup> Raine, *By Berwen Banks*, p. 92.

<sup>93</sup> A. Raine, *A Welsh Singer* (London: Hutchinson and Co, 1897), p. 60.

language'.<sup>94</sup> After the discovery of Myfanwy's singing voice, however, the mistress soon changes her mind. Rather than resenting the attitude of the employer, the young maid is overcome with pride at being engaged by such a 'grand lady' as the circus master's wife.<sup>95</sup> Even an elderly friend to whom she turned for guidance on the matter of finding work counselled her that 'it was a very fine thing to be taken in hand at once by a lady like Mrs Pomfrey, and an English lady, too! It will be fine for thee, Myfanwy. Thou'll learn to speak English soon, but don't thee forget thy Welsh now'.<sup>96</sup> Therefore, cultural change upon entering domestic service, it is suggested, was expected, accepted and even welcomed by some members of the Welsh working-class.

The reluctance of many servants to leave their home communities combined with the often short duration of their working life meant that enduring cultural change was often kept to a minimum.<sup>97</sup> The presence of friends and family helped servants maintain an identity separate to that which the employer may have wished to cultivate for them. Of those girls who did migrate out of Wales, retaining a connection with their home culture was made considerably easier when working for Welsh employers. Several of the ladies interviewed as part of the Swansea Valley Audio project and those who provided accounts later published in the Co-operative Guild anthology indicated a desire to maintain some form of connection with their national culture. For many this was achieved through attendance at Welsh chapels. Mrs Landon claimed that she had spent a considerable amount of her free time with fellow Welsh servants.<sup>98</sup> She particularly remembered spending Thursday at a 'Welsh afternoon' in a Kings Cross chapel in London, despite the fact that at home she and her family attended an English Congregational Chapel. She described how 'we (her and a friend) used to go to Kings Cross on a Thursday afternoon to meet people from Wales... Elgid Lwyd was the minister then and they used to make them a cup of tea and things and they would have a little concert of the evening'.<sup>99</sup> Homesickness appears to have increased her desire to be a part of a distinctively Welsh organisation or else no English language alternative was available. Her Welsh

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, p. 66.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 67.

<sup>97</sup> Mrs Wrigley, 'A Plate-Maker's Wife', in M. Llewelyn Davies (ed.), *Life As We Have Known It: The Voices of Working-class Women*, (London: Virago Press, 2012) pp. 62-73.

<sup>98</sup> SWML: AUD/399, 'Women's' Work Experiences'.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.



employers, two teachers also from Brynamman, facilitated her attendance by permitting her the afternoon off. In doing so, it would appear that they were happy for their maid to retain a connection with the wider Welsh migrant community in London. While geographical, language and religious divides may have been overriden by the practice of employing servants from the same place of origin as the householders, the issue of class remained. Deirdre Beddoe has claimed that there was not such a large social gap between Welsh maids working for Welsh employers as those working for English employers.<sup>100</sup> Yet, conflict was supposedly more likely in households where the class gap between employers and staff was narrower.<sup>101</sup> One maid interviewed also claimed that during her time in service she had preferred to work for English employers as they were easier to work for and did not expect so much.<sup>102</sup> This indicates that there was only a limited degree of cohesion between migrant Welsh employers and their servants. However, even where a large class divide did exist conflict still occurred preventing unity in Welsh migrant communities. As Emrys Jones summarised 'they were living in the same squares, but moving in different circles'.<sup>103</sup> Even the Welsh chapels could prove as divisive as they were unifying, sometimes turning away servants in favour of a more middle-class congregation, though this was not disclosed in any of the examined testimonies.<sup>104</sup> It would appear that class boundaries and social prejudice permeated even national loyalties. Therefore, while the practice of migrants employing servants from back home helped many servants retain their own cultural identities the relationships remained fraught.

Continuity in religious practice could be achieved through complete segregation or overlooking difference. The maintenance of a divide between servants and employers of different faiths is perceptible in certain areas of the industry in south Wales. For instance, the Cardiff register of children hired out as servants from the local cottage homes revealed that Catholic families were only ever given Catholic

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<sup>100</sup> D. Beddoe, 'Munionettes, Maids and Mams: Women in Wales, 1914-1939' in A.V. John, (ed.) *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1839* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1991), p. 199.

<sup>101</sup> Dawes, *Not in Front of the Servants*, p. 32; Hugget, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 35.

<sup>102</sup> SWML: AUD/399, 'Women's' Work Experiences'.

<sup>103</sup> Jones, 'Victorian Heyday', p. 121.

<sup>104</sup> M. A. Williams, *A Forgotten Army: Female Munitions Workers of South Wales, 1939- 1945* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 141.

servants.<sup>105</sup> Of the 262 children who were found places between 1913 and 1921, only 24 were Catholic and all went to Catholic employers. Yet between nonconformists and Anglicans no such barrier existed with children from Anglican backgrounds placed in chapel-going families and occasionally nonconformist servants with Anglican employers. Yet, the situations vacant columns reveal that many employers objected to engaging Nonconformists. Advertisements often read 'General servant wanted, must be experienced and of the Church of England principles' and 'Wanted, in a gentleman's family, a respectable person as kitchen maid, who can manage a small dairy; milking and churning done by a man; the dairy adjoins the house; a member of the Church of England; good references required'.<sup>106</sup> Another advert published on the same day was even more selective: 'Wanted, general servant, must be equal to plain cooking, cleanly, active, early riser, and fond of children; English girl, and a member of the Church of England preferred; must also possess unquestionable character as to honesty'.<sup>107</sup> Yet, over 2000 advertisements only a small minority of employers stated a required religious preference and of these all but one desired Anglican workers, while another vaguely stated that they simply wanted a Christian. Of the servants who sought work through the newspaper most described themselves as 'Christian', possibly in the hope of assuring their respectability without limiting their employment options by stating an exact denomination. There is no evidence to suggest that servants were in any way as selective of employer religion as mistresses were of their staff. Therefore, it would appear that in those households where religious practice was imperative to the employers, servants of the same faith were recruited.

In practice, only a minority of job advertisements mentioned religion and few personal accounts referred to any religious barrier. Yet religious divides between the different Protestant denominations form a potent theme in the novels of Allen Raine. Her interest in how religious differences could affect household dynamics is especially prevalent in her 1907 work *By Berwen Banks*.<sup>108</sup> The story focuses on the rivalry between a Methodist preacher and an Anglican vicar and the impact their feud has upon a young couple, one of whom was the Vicar's son Cardo and the other the

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<sup>105</sup> GA, SD/SO/11/2, Register of Children Hired Out as Servants Cardiff, 1913-1921.

<sup>106</sup> Situation Vacant Column, *Western Mail*, 15 August 1881.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Raine, *By Berwen Banks*.

preacher's niece Valmai. Although animosity between the two men is evident it did not prevent the 'Vicar Du' from allowing his servant, Shanw, to attend chapel.<sup>109</sup> However, tension simmers between Shanw and the Anglican housekeeper, Betto, who feels herself to be superior owing to the fact she is of the same religion as their employer, with 'frequent frays' becoming the inevitable result.<sup>110</sup> While the vicar employed Methodists on his free-holding, his discontent at doing so surfaces every now and again in the novel. When two of his Methodist farm-servants Dyc and Ebben attended a chapel meeting it was said that the Vicar Du 'knew as well as his son did that it would be useless to try and persuade his servants to be absent from the meetings, and the knowledge galled him bitterly, too bitterly for words, so he was silent'.<sup>111</sup> His resentment was made worse by the fact that his own church numbers were dwindling. Thus, the power of the Nonconformist chapel was portrayed as so extreme he was even powerless to prevent it from penetrating his own home.

Unlike the *Situations Vacant*, the novel creates the impression that religion was a highly emotive issue between servants and their employers. However, this was partly the result of the author's own interest in the role of denominational divides owing to the divisions that had long existed in her own extended family. Her parents both belonged to the Anglican faith, despite coming from families with long and illustrious connections to Nonconformity. Raine's maternal line included Daniel Rowland, a cleric and 'leading figure' of the Welsh Methodist Revival, while, her father's ancestry included Reverend David Davis, Unitarian minister and close friend of the philosopher and Nonconformist Academy tutor Richard Price.<sup>112</sup> It has been argued that she aimed to use 'the benign romance genre as a convenient solvent of many kinds of tension in the Welsh society of her time-the class and cultural tension between Anglicised gentry and Welsh peasantry, the Welsh language and the English language, and of course church and chapel'.<sup>113</sup> In this way her depictions of romantic

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<sup>109</sup> 'Vicar Du' meaning 'Black Vicar'. He received such a nickname on account of his dark appearance and brooding personality.

<sup>110</sup> Raine, *By* Berwen Banks, p. 21.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 30-31.

<sup>112</sup> S. Jones, *Writers of Wales: Allen Raine* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1979), p. 4; *Welsh Biography Online*, <http://wbo.llgc.org.uk>, [accessed 1 February 2013].

<sup>113</sup> M. W. Thomas, *In the Shadow of the Pulpit: Literature and Non-Conformist Wales*, (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2011), p. 67.

union demonstrated to her readers the possibility of finding middle ground in class and religious conflict.<sup>114</sup>

Other contemporary sources also sought to foster religious tolerance between employers and servants. Articles published in the periodical, *The Girls Own Paper*, sought to encourage mistresses to accommodate the religious preferences of their staff.<sup>115</sup> One of the articles by Emma Brewer, author of *Love, Too, Is Vanity* (1885), argued that 'where liberty can be given in matters such as going to church or chapel, it ought not to be withheld. A girl who has been brought up all her life as a dissenter should not be compelled to go to the parish church, nor a member of the Church of England forced to go to chapel'.<sup>116</sup> In trying to set out the importance of servant religious freedom, Brewer draws upon personal experience:

I have had a Welsh servant in my house for a long time, and for the first few Sundays she went with the other members of the household to our parish church. I soon noticed that she was losing her spirits and bright look, and found on enquiry she was very miserable at giving up her Welsh Methodist service, which she clung to with great tenacity. By granting her wish at once I have retained a good and faithful servant. She has never abused the liberty so given; on the contrary, she has made me respect the sect to which she belongs.<sup>117</sup>

This article demonstrates that while some employers were happy for servants to continue in their own faith, others compelled their staff to join their churches and did so possibly without realising the impact it had upon the individual. It also shows that religious freedom was one step that could be taken to alleviate some of the tensions between mistress and maid.

Brewer's arguments bore a resemblance to another article 'Servants and Service' published seven years prior by a more prolific author, Ruth Lamb.<sup>118</sup> Her article on the service industry was a direct attempt to remedy the servant shortage and household friction. She claimed that:

young Welsh girls, in particular, will often sacrifice something in order to be near a place of worship where service is conducted in their native tongue, and

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> E. Brewer, 'Our Friends the Servants' in *The Girls Own Paper*, 5 November 1892; Lamb, 'Servants and Service', *The Girls Own Paper*, 5 September 1885. Emma Brewer, now of little notoriety but her novels were publicised in the national press also wrote articles for periodicals such as *The Girls Own Paper*.

<sup>116</sup> Brewer, 'Our Friends the Servants', 1892.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid.

<sup>118</sup> Lamb, 'Servants and Service', 1885. She wrote many novels such as *Work, Wait, Win* (1894), *One Little Vein of Dross* (1889), and *Only a Girl Wife* (1900).

they show how they value the Sunday-school, by continuing as scholars years after the usual age of leaving. Since those whom they meet must have similar tastes, this fact secures for them the kind of associates that Christian employers would choose for their servants.<sup>119</sup>

Her article very much reflected the traditional perception of Wales as a Welsh speaking, Nonconformist nation. It also advocated the recruitment of such girls and demonstrated the advantages to be gained from permitting them to retain their own religion. The existence of these articles suggests a movement towards more religious toleration by the end of the nineteenth-century as Horn has previously suggested.<sup>120</sup> However, their actual existence is testimony to the fact that religious intolerance was not obsolete amongst employers and so necessitated the articles' publication. Therefore, it is evident that servants were vulnerable to the impositions of employers on their cultural practices and ethnic identity. While, this was only temporary or failed to occur at all it remained an area of significant tension in the industry.

Therefore, an examination of servant-employer relations has revealed that the absence of central regulation had a significant impact on the industry. It firstly fostered a sense of vulnerability as no government legislation in industrial body existed that provided effective protection to either party. The lack of an official entry route broadened the social base from which servants and employers were drawn. This heightened tensions as the lack of exclusivity surrounding both positions led to a surge in professional protectionism. Lower status servants and employers were subsequently vilified by their status counterparts. The harsher conditions often found in modest households was often the result of economic limitations than social status insecurity. One of the key problems identified in the industry was the lack of trust between employers and their staff. This may also be attributed to the absence of central regulation as mistresses frequently locked cupboards and generally kept a close eye on their servants owing to poor past experiences, or else fear that a too lax approach would result in the disreputable reputation of both the maid and the household in which she worked. Finally, the lack of regulation enabled servant-keepers to shape the cultural identity of their domestics. While this held the potential to cause resentment, many servants actually sought to mimic the cultural attributes of their employers, through learning English for instance, viewing it as a means of self

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Horn, *Life Below Stairs*, p. 38.

betterment. Consequently, the absence of regulation impacted greatly on servant-employer relations, its wider image and appeal to new recruits.

## Conclusion

Between 1871 and 1921 domestic service in south Wales experienced a dramatic level of change. During that span of time, the industry expanded considerably as new occupations developed and traditional specialist positions declined. Servant-keeping became less exclusive as domestic helpers were recruited by even the most modest of householders. This led to a significant shift in the demographic of the service workforce, with older and married workers entering its ranks in ever growing numbers, as the 'daily' character of positions made the sector accessible to a broader spectrum of the population. Wider social and economic developments such as industrialisation, urbanisation and the emergence of the middle classes have been shown to have had a significant impact on the industry. The First World War was also highly influential. It exacerbated servant discontent, heightening the dislike of deference and the living-in system.<sup>1</sup> In the short-term the conflict also led to a fall in the number of domestics (especially males). However the contraction was not as pronounced as expected and failed to continue far beyond the end of hostilities. While the Great War had significant short-term implication, this research has demonstrated it to be a problematic 'periodisation marker' for domestic service.

The expansion of the sector also led to the emergence of impersonal recruitment methods such as newspaper adverts and employment agencies. While these facilitated greater geographical mobility, both in Britain and in the colonies, they also heightened the dangers facing young servants. This impacted on contemporary perceptions of the sector and its labour force. Separate sphere ideology and derogatory national depictions augmented negative servant stereotypes. Despite the stigma workers continued to enter service through personal preference and economic necessity. For women it provided a rare source of independent income, the opportunity to travel and a chance of personal betterment. Domestic service offered men a viable alternative to coal mining in an area dominated by heavy industry. As most male positions were skilled they enjoyed a higher status than many of their female colleagues. Such was the level of demand in south Wales that outdoor, institutional and business positions could be obtained with relative ease. The size of

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<sup>1</sup> L. Lethbridge, *Servants: A Downstairs View of Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2013), p. 145.

the sector with its multiple occupations and scattered workplaces militated against central regulation.

Consequently, a sense of vulnerability was engendered amongst the householders and their staff which often manifested itself in suspicion, complaints and mistreatment. The accessibility of the sector intensified problems leading to a sense of professional protectionism. This utilised class rhetoric to distinguish respectable servants from their inexperienced counterparts and affluent employers from those of more modest means. However, not all servant-employer relationships were strained particularly with the dilution of paternalism as daily positions in households, businesses and public institutions became more common. Therefore, the domestic service industry in south Wales underwent a notable transition during the period from its traditional eighteenth-century format to a more modern structure still recognisable today.

This study of domestic service in south Wales has some important repercussions on our understanding of the sector in Britain. It has been argued that domestic service needs to be examined as an industry. It is only through such an approach that a full understanding of its character and role in society can be gained. Its status as a prime economic sector is confirmed by the existence of distinguishable occupations and trade organisations and a distinctive public image. For a more inclusive insight into the industry the term 'domestic' has been interpreted as a descriptor of duties rather than a place of work. As a result three branches of the sector have emerged: private household workers; institutional domestics; and business staff. Such an approach reflects more closely the variations in service during the late-nineteenth century, and is in stark contrast to the traditional hierarchy of servants, which was seldom realised outside of the county-house estate. For instance a housekeeper working in the home of an aristocrat performed a supervisory role and received high wages. In contrast, a housekeeper based in a modest household undertook duties more akin to those undertaken by a 'maid of all work', especially if no other servants were employed. Therefore positions were not solely characterised in terms of skill level of tasks carried out, factors such as age, gender, marital status, employer preference and type of establishment were instrumental in determining job titles.



The concept of the servant hierarchy has generated a narrow understanding of the sector. It was the legacy of the more exclusive form of servant-keeping found in previous centuries, where the elite of society retained an army of liveried staff. Although such employers were rare in south Wales in the late-nineteenth century, tradition and a preoccupation with social class has resulted in the continued dominance of the country house hierarchy. This was made visible in the census case study of Carmarthen where older titles such as lady's maid or house maid were applied to women engaged in single-servant households. Therefore traditional titles were employed long after the occupational distinctions had been made redundant. A preoccupation with social status has also led to the neglect of domestics engaged in working-class households, businesses and public institutions where the servant-employer relationship was more impersonal or the juxtaposition between poverty and affluence was less apparent. A whole-industry approach has sought to redress this omission. In doing so, we arrive at an understanding of domestic service that more closely resembles that of contemporaries. This is evident in the newspaper articles and personal testimony that highlight the fluid movement of workers between branches of the sector. Servants frequently moved in and out of positions in homes, pubs, clubs, hospitals and hotels. The press and census clerks perceived servants engaged in the three branches as belonging to one industry as apparent in the situations vacant columns and official census tabulations. Nineteenth-century Welsh fiction also depicted workers in businesses, homes and institutions as being part of one recognisable industry. Therefore, this study presents a new way of envisaging domestic service that can be applied to the wider British industry.

This study has also challenged our understanding of the function of domestic service in British society. The sector has been perceived as an indicator of middle-class status and a facilitator of a bourgeois lifestyle.<sup>2</sup> Yet as a marker of social position domestic service has proved highly problematic owing to the diversity of people that engaged domestics and entered its workforce.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the sector has

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<sup>2</sup> P. Horn, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Servant* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1975), p. 17; T. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France 1820- 1920* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1976), p. 10; R. Scadden, *No Job for a Little Girl: Voices from Domestic Service* (Llandysul: Gomer Press, 2013), p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> J. Merchant, 'An Insurrection of Maids: Domestics Servants and the Agitation of 1872' in L. Miskell, C. A. Whately, B. Harris, *Victorian Dundee: Image and Realities* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000) p. 112; S. Pooley, 'Domestic Servants and their Urban Employers: A Case Study of Lancaster, 1880- 1914', *Economic History Review* 62 (2009) p. 407.

emerged as a practical and purposeful industry, which formed a key feature of nineteenth and twentieth-century society. Firstly, it supported the development of leisure facilities, state institutions and municipal buildings. In private households they were often an essential part of everyday life, particularly for widowers, invalids and the elderly. The recruitment of servants also enabled women to assist in family businesses, participate in charitable organisations, and even enter paid employment.<sup>4</sup> This may explain why shopkeepers were the largest employers of maids in each of the three case-study towns. The recruitment of servants to undertake household chores enabled many wives to assist their husbands in the stores, while other domestics may have undertaken additional duties in the shop themselves.<sup>5</sup> The industry also functioned as a vehicle for migration, both in terms of rural to urban relocation and immigration to the colonies. South Wales was not the only area targeted by such initiatives, for instance the St Peter's Emigration Club was set up in West Bromwich, Birmingham and the East End Emigration Fund operated in London during the 1880s. They aimed to persuade young women and certain groups of men to emigrate from densely populated areas in search of jobs and/or spouses.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, domestic service helped consolidate British imperial possessions abroad.<sup>7</sup> The industry also functioned as a benevolent tool for remedying many of the social ills associated with the increasingly urbanised society. This was particularly evident in Cardiff, where numerous organisations used service as a way of combating crime, prostitution and poverty. Even children resident in the Cottage Homes institutions, injured veterans of the First World War and unmarried middle-class women were directed into the industry. Therefore, an examination of domestic service in south Wales has provided an insight into the numerous functions of the industry in British society.

The research on south Wales has also provided a deeper insight into the influence of gender and class on domestic service in Britain. Traditional class stereotypes and gender doctrines had a significant impact on contemporary perceptions of servants and the way they have been depicted by subsequent

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<sup>4</sup> J. Giles, 'Authority, Dependence and Power in Accounts of Twentieth-Century Domestic Service' in L. Delap, et al. *The Politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), on p. 208.

<sup>5</sup> D. Beddoe, *Out of the Shadows: A History of Women in Twentieth-Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2000), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> 'Public Officials', *The North Eastern Daily Gazette*, 10 September 1883.

<sup>7</sup> Lethbridge, *Servants*, p. 100.

historians. In many ways separate sphere ideology played a significant role in domestic service between 1871 and 1921. The similarities between the duties of a domestic and those of a housewife made service the most socially acceptable form of female employment. Meanwhile internal gender barriers consigned most female servants to lower status roles and restricted their activities to the indoor realm. This has led service to be viewed as a significant source of female oppression.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, interest in social class has focused attention on those servants engaged by members of the aristocracy or bourgeoisie. Such households rendered disparities in wealth and culture most visible and led to the emergence of the upstairs/downstairs portrayal of the industry. Class rhetoric has also conditioned discussions surrounding the servant-employer relationship both in terms of social conflict and control.<sup>9</sup> Debates surrounding the 'lady-help' project provided a particular insight into the depth of class prejudice surrounding the domestic service industry.<sup>10</sup>

However, this study has revealed that the British domestic service industry had a far more complex relationship with both class and gender than simply reinforcing social barriers and bolstering established ideological doctrines. The research has revealed that employers and domestics could be drawn from a broad social group. This has challenged the notion that servants were credible symbols of affluence. Instead a picture has emerged of the servant and employer status as being more fluid and less exclusive with people adopting each role during different periods of their lives. It has also been argued that the lack of industrial regulation in Britain often generated feelings of vulnerability and mistrust which could manifest itself as harsh treatment, lack of respect, and poor working conditions. Service was also able to transgress social barriers as it was a site of class contact. Where servants and employers belonged to two different social groups, the potential was present for the exchange of cultural habits and cross-class friendships and, on rare occasions, even marriage. Likewise, domestic service also helped permeate gender divides. It has been demonstrated that even in areas associated with heavy industry, men played an

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<sup>8</sup> R. Scadden, *'Be good sweet maid, and let who will be clever': A Study of Welsh Girls in Domestic Service during the Interwar Period*, (Swansea University: PhD Thesis, 1996), pp. 1 and 3.

<sup>9</sup> M. Beetham, 'Domestic Servants as Poachers of Print: Reading, Authority and Resistance in Late Victorian Britain' in L. Delap et al. *The politics of Domestic Authority in Britain since 1800* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009) pp. 185- 200; S. Todd, 'Domestic Service and Class Relations in Britain 1900-1950' in *Past and Present*, 28 (2009) p. 183.

<sup>10</sup> 'The British Association at Bristol', *Daily News*, 28 August 1875.

increasingly important role in the sector. Unlike country-house staff, the majority of male servants were not associated with effeminacy owing to the outdoor and skilled nature of their work.<sup>11</sup> Despite its domestic connotations, the industry also assisted women through providing a chance to enter employment, amass savings, and build a career amongst other things. Although not all women benefitted from these opportunities the industry was significant as it helped lay the foundations for the movement towards female equality. Therefore, a study of domestic service in south Wales has provided an insight into the complex relationship between service, class and gender that deepens our comprehension of the wider British sector.

South Wales has emerged as an important location for the wider British domestic service industry. It not only supplied a significant number of domestics to households in England and abroad but was also a key area for servant recruitment in Britain. This was the result of the high demand for servants stimulated by the prosperity generated by industrialisation and the large population present in south Wales (Between 1871 and 1921 the proportion of the Welsh population living in Glamorgan increased from 28 to 47 percent).<sup>12</sup> As the population expanded so did the number of servant vacancies. Throughout the period employer demand remained higher than worker supply, a trend that had a significant impact on development of the industry. The number of local opportunities has revealed that the majority of servants did not need to move out of the area to source work. The fact that many did would suggest that their reasons for relocating were not purely driven by economic factors before 1921. Some may have sought to permanently migrate, travel, or obtain higher status roles. So plentiful were the positions that migrants from elsewhere in Britain were frequently recruited by Welsh householders. The prominence of the industry in south Wales is also confirmed by the number of recruitment agencies, charities and training schemes that have been discovered in the area, most notably, the local government funded, South Wales and Monmouthshire School of Cookery and Domestic Arts. These developments have demonstrated that south Wales was an important region in the wider British domestic service sector.

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<sup>11</sup> T. Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660- 1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2000), p. 66. Hill, *Servants*, p. 39.

<sup>12</sup> J. Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, Vol. 1. (Aberystwyth: University of Wales Press, 1985), pp. 7 and 17.

This study of domestic service also has important implications for our understanding of Welsh cultural stereotypes. The qualitative research suggests that the ideas propagated by the 'Blue Books' continued to influence the perception of Welsh females, and therefore Welsh servants, in the British press. Regional practices such as bundling and mop fair recruitment was a particular cause for concern and contributed to social perceptions of Welsh domestics as promiscuous. Many of the allegations stemmed from members of the middle-class, particularly religious leaders and magistrates. However there is little real evidence to suggest that servants in Wales were any less respectable than those in other countries. The accusations may be seen as part of wider bourgeois social concerns over the cultural practices and personal habits of the working-class during the late-Victorian period. Yet, despite the occasional accusation of immorality, 'unveracity', or incompetence, on the whole there was little evidence of prejudice against Welsh servants on the grounds of ethnicity. This may have been the result of the unthreatening depictions of Wales (especially in contrast to Ireland) that dominated British popular culture during the period. The notion of the '*Gwerin*' and 'Wild Wales' romanticised the landscape and people, as evident in the popularity of the novels of Allen Raine and travelogues such as that written by Wirt Sikes.<sup>13</sup> The Anglicised nature of some urban areas in Wales may also have accounted for the lack of prejudice. The number of monoglot Welsh speakers had dwindled, accounting for 6 percent of the overall population in 1921. In Glamorgan only 2 percent of the total number of inhabitants was exclusively Welsh speaking.<sup>14</sup> The English-speaking and Protestant character of Wales removed many potential barriers to employment. Distinction between Nonconformists and Anglicans imposed a degree of division, as displayed in the Cottage Homes registers of young people hired out as servants and the situation vacant advertisements. However, high employer demand and calls for religious tolerance of Nonconformists, in periodical such as the *Girls Own Paper*, appears to have overcome any notable discrimination.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, domestic service has provided an insight into nineteenth-century Welsh stereotypes and the degree of influence they exerted over the prospects and portrayals of servants.

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<sup>13</sup> R. M. Jones, 'Beyond identity? The Reconstruction of the Welsh' in *Journal of British Studies* 31 (1992) p. 331.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, *Digest of Welsh Historical Statistics*, pp. 78-80.

<sup>15</sup> R. Lamb, 'Servants and Service', *Girls Own Paper*, 5 September 1885.

An examination of the domestic service industry has developed our understanding of the wider society and economy in south Wales. It has provided an insight into the social response to industrialisation and the problems that accompanied urbanisation. For example, migration and the movement towards impersonal recruitment methods provoked significant public alarm. As a result considerable discussion of the dangers facing young servants surfaced. Consequently numerous benevolent schemes were established as the industry was increasingly recognised as a convenient way of remedying the social problems that developed with urbanisation such as crime, poverty and prostitution. Therefore, the approach of contemporaries to domestic service reveals wider attitudes towards urban society. A study of domestic service also enhances our awareness of the development of the leisure sector and municipal governance. This can be perceived in the growth in business and institutional staff during the period. An examination of the industry also reveals the social attitudes surrounding gender and class in south Wales. For instance the Bute Dowry indicates that service was viewed as a common precursor to marriage. Meanwhile, discussion surrounding the engagement of ‘lady helps’ has highlighted public fears of class transgression. Therefore, the development of the domestic service industry has provided a deeper exploration into society in south Wales.

Regional analysis provides a detailed insight into the sector and the influence of local socio-economic factors. Variations in the industry have been demonstrated through a census case-study of Bridgend, Aberdare and Carmarthen. Yet, the three towns are not intended to be representative of south Wales as a whole, nor were they solely selected to provide contrast. It has been argued that Welsh national identity has predominantly centred on ‘Wild Wales’ or the coalfield.<sup>16</sup> These towns bridge both sphere and also present an analysis of service in a location that failed to conform to either stereotype. Such an approach provides a more cohesive study of south Wales. This is important as it has facilitated a deeper understanding of the factors that influenced the industry. Neither the towns nor domestic service existed in a vacuum but were greatly shaped by broader Welsh and British trends. Only through considering the different aspects of the area can a more accurate depiction be acquired. For instance, the decline in the number of agricultural positions elevated

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<sup>16</sup> Jones, ‘Beyond identity?’, p. 331.

the proportion of country-born workers in Bridgend and Aberdare. Likewise, the expansion of industrialisation in Glamorgan and Llanelli resulted in a high level of female servant-keepers and an older than average female workforce in the industry in Carmarthen. Similarly, although Bridgend was located outside of the coalfield, many servant-keeping inhabitants held supervisory and managerial roles in the mining industry. The prosperity generated in the coalfield was shared even by those town located outside of it. Therefore, a study of domestic service has highlighted the need to adopt a cohesive approach to the history of south Wales.

The research findings also had a significant impact on our perception Welsh national identity, challenging its masculine and proletariat stereotype. South Wales has traditionally been associated with heavy industry. However it has been revealed that at one stage, there were almost as many servants as there were miners. Given the likelihood that many female positions have gone unrecorded the number of domestics may have been even higher. The focus on heavy industry has reflected the broader masculine character of Wales. As R. Merfyn Jones has argued 'the Welsh identity, whether expressed in the figure of the nonconformist minister or the miner, rugby playing and socialist, resonated with masculinity'.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, women have been confined to the popular image of the 'Welsh mam', portrayed as 'a long-suffering woman, keeping home and husband respectable in an intensely male world'.<sup>18</sup> This description has coloured the perception of servants as they have frequently been portrayed as, young, female and essentially housewives in the making. This has led to a focus on 'maids of all work', yet a whole-industry approach has revealed the more complex character of Welsh society beneath the stereotype. An increase in business and institutional staff has highlighted the presence of women outside the home sphere. Similarly, the existence of career domestics has challenged the reliability of the 'Welsh mam' stereotype, revealing that service was not just preparation for marriage. The growth in the number of male servants has also provided a new way of perceiving men in south Wales. Therefore, service has undermined the reliability of the 'miner' and 'mam' perception of south Wales society. The proletarian nature of national identity has also been called into question by this study. The research has demonstrated that there was a large and

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, p. 349.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

buoyant service sector in the region and that it did not simply supply servants to the south-east of England. In acknowledging the presence of the service industry it has become apparent that there was a significant middle-class populace in Wales.<sup>19</sup> This challenges working-class depictions of Welsh society. Servant-keeping was not restricted to the bourgeoisie as householders from a broad spectrum of the population recruited domestics. Yet, the notion of working-class employers presents a different dynamic to the proletarian, socialist image often projected. Consequently, this study has greatly highlighted the more complex nature of Welsh society that underlies the dominant national characteristics.

A range of primary material has been consulted to provide as accurate and in-depth a study as possible. However, owing to the limitations of the research a number of omissions have been made, for instance kin-servants have proved difficult to trace. Where servants and employers were recorded in census enumerators' books as sharing a surname and/or the same place of birth, it may be assumed that a family connection was present. However, primary material seldom provided conclusive proof of a blood or marital connection and the practice of hiring relatives as servants is curiously absent from the qualitative sources. Ensuring a balance between the focus on household staff and those engaged in businesses and institutions has also proved difficult at times. Despite their presence in the quantitative data, they along with male servants, are absent from first-hand accounts such as memoirs and interviews. This may have been the result of the traditional association between servants, domesticity and femininity that influenced the type of accounts solicited for oral histories and written anthologies. The focus on 'women's history' and 'history from below' during the mid-nineteenth century has contributed to the marginalisation of men and non-household workers. The research presented in studies of country-house servants have been accused of bias in favour of employers as they created the majority of historical records in existence today.<sup>20</sup> However, this study has found that it is the voice of the employers that have been the most difficult to access. Therefore, novels and correspondence to the *Western Mail* have proved important forms of

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<sup>19</sup> N. Evans 'The Welsh Victorian City: The Middle Class and Civic and National Consciousness in Cardiff, 1850- 1914', *The Welsh History Review*, 12 (1985), pp. 350- 387.

<sup>20</sup> J. J. Hecht, *Servant Class in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1956), p.xi.



evidence as they give an insight into employer attitudes and an alternative perspective on the industry.

Although this study has not sought to focus on individual experiences of either servants or employers, a balanced understanding of developments can only be obtained through careful consideration of both servant and employer testimony. While this problem has been redressed, to a certain extent, by the breadth of research undertaken, omissions still exist such as the accounts of male servant-keepers as they have proved largely silent. Another limitation of this study is that, in the main, only English language material has been consulted. The inclusion of Welsh language documents may provide more insight into the operation into the operation of informal language barriers and wider perceptions of the service industry. The incorporation of Welsh newspapers and manuscripts would be of particular importance if the study was to be expanded to encompass the whole of Wales as opposed to a focus on the predominantly Anglicised southern region. With more time and the acquisition of a higher proficiency in Welsh it is believed that a study of the sector could be expanded to a national rather than regional analysis. This would facilitate the inclusion of a wider scope of published and archival material and a larger case-study, with a greater variety of settlements being incorporated. This would reveal more fully the different character of the industry in various counties and provide a more thorough understanding of the role of Wales in the British domestic service industry.

Another weakness of the research has been the limited availability of material relating to the impact of the First World War on the industry in South Wales. This has proved especially evident in discussions of class divisions, recruitment methods and workforce demography. The omission was largely the result of the unavailability of the 1921 census enumerators' books and the limited qualitative material pertaining to domestic service during the conflict having been discovered. There also remains some difficulty ascertaining the extent to which the developments in the industry between 1911 and 1921 were the direct consequence of the First World War and to what extent it merely exacerbated existing trends. While the *Western Mail's* situation vacant advertisements have provided some insight into the size and occupational composition of the sector, further information has proved limited. It should also be

noted that the advertisements were merely an indication of demand and not of the actual numbers engaged.

Despite the limitations of the research an extensive variety of primary material has been incorporated. More conventional sources have been examined in new ways such as the statistical survey of the situation vacant adverts. Developments such as digitalisation have also facilitated a more detailed exploration of the portrayal and activities of domestics as presented in online newspapers. New material has also been unearthed, for example, the Bute dowry records and the novels of Allen Raine, which have given a greater insight into the function of service in south Wales. Through the incorporation of such a variety of sources, an exploration of this industry, in both rural and urban Wales during a key period in its development has been made possible. As a result a closer examination of this important Welsh industry during a vital period of its evolution has been made possible.

## A SERVANT'S GRIEVANCE.

### GIRLS ASK FOR PROTECTION AGAINST TYRANNOUS MISTRESSES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "WESTERN MAIL."

SIR,—Will you insert a servant's complaints of the way in which the majority of that much-abused class are treated? No one seems to heed our long hours or our holidays, which are (like angels' visits) few and far between. There seems no other class working at a greater disadvantage. For instance, no servant can expect a situation who has not got a good reference and a long one from where she last lived. It often happens she has been living with unprincipled people, who think not half so much of their servants as they do of their dumb animals. What is it to them if the girl does not get a situation? She has offended them in some way or other. Perhaps she had had more than her share of work, bad food, and other things too numerous to mention, and she has spoken too plainly to please them. That, of course, is considered impertinent, for, according to many mistresses' opinion, a servant is a being made expressly for them, and she has no rights whatever, and she is told she need not expect a character. What are servants to do under these circumstances? They may be out of a situation for months—perhaps something worse. Do the mistresses think we have no spirit, and that we must bear quietly the petty tyranny they have it in their power to use in a hundred ways? My two last situations have happened to be places where it is impossible for servants to live, I being the sixth servant in three months, and yet we have nothing and no one to warn us of places of this sort. I think it is a serious matter that our character (I may say our livelihood) is at the mercy of such people. Why cannot something be done to benefit servants, as well as other working classes? Servants ought to know what kind of places they are going into, as well as the character of the people they are to live with.—Hoping some abler pen will take this up, I am, &c.,

A SERVANT.

Swansea.

**"THE SERVANT OF TO-DAY."**

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "WESTERN MAIL."

SIR.—After 30 years of housekeeping, and after keeping my servants for periods of from two to nineteen years, I have had in the last twelve months an experience of what education has done for the "lower classes." My old servants left through illness of the mother in one case; the other got married. A girl came as housemaid nineteen years of age, wages £12, everything found her as I had myself or gave to my daughters. In the mornings her work was to clean the dining-room and lay breakfast by eight o'clock, which she accomplished by sitting on the floor reading a novelette, and drawing a chair to and fro on the staining to make believe she was working. My husband and self were both very ill at the time, and often complained of the noise, but the nurse wisely kept it from us till after the maid left, which she did on a moment's notice, as a friend had got her a situation in Glamorganshire for £2 more wages!! Then I engaged a girl from England at £14 wages. She said she was in rather poor health. When she came I found her in a pitifully weak state, fainting on the slightest exertion. She was an orphan and homeless, but had been thoroughly well trained in an institution, was clean and well-mannered. So I gave her beef tea, jelly, port wine, &c., for fully two months. She gained strength and looked healthy and strong, did her work easily, and I thought I should be well repaid. At the end of six months she said she felt so well that she wished to leave, as her health was good enough now to return to London, and she "hated Wales." The fact is, being English, she thought she was far above Welsh people generally, and at one time hinted that she should like to have a bedroom and sitting-room to herself, as she disliked sharing rooms with a Welsh girl. Next came as cook a respectable, well-mannered woman, and I thought I had a good servant, and was hoping to be settled comfortably as in days of yore, she appearing to be a staid, steady person. Three weeks after entering my service she was taken ill. The doctor on arriving pronounced her to be about to become a mother! So far as character giving is concerned, this woman came well recommended by two

ladies. I paid her railway fare home 100  
 miles, gave her £14 wages and certain privileges  
 beside, and, in addition to that, had to pay two  
 doctors. I also gave her a month's wages because  
 she had no money to leave. I then engaged two  
 more girls, who have been about five weeks, and  
 my husband and I were again congratulating our-  
 selves that, as servants go, we had settled on some  
 fair specimens, when, to our dismay, this week we  
 discovered the housemaid—a girl of sixteen—to  
 whom I gave £9 wages, and had undertaken to  
 train in housework, was robbing us right and left,  
 and, when discovered, actually burnt a quantity  
 of the things stolen in the kitchen stove rather  
 than restore them. I may say the cook was pre-  
 sent when she did it. Unfortunately, neither my  
 daughters or any of my family are used to lock up  
 anything except wine and money, as we have  
 had hitherto honest people about us. My servants  
 live precisely as we do ourselves, have the same  
 joints, fish, or poultry to cut from themselves, as  
 good a bedroom, and the kitchen most comfortably  
 furnished for them to sit in. They go out every  
 Sunday, generally afternoon and evening, and  
 when they like to ask in the week. On principle,  
 I do not allow a regular evening out, as I attribute  
 much of the immorality which obtains in this  
 neighbourhood to this particular cause. I fre-  
 quently on fine afternoons send them out for an  
 hour's walk in turns. We are a small family, have  
 early dinners, washing and baking out, no  
 underground kitchen, wages from £19 to £14  
 and frequent presents, and yet I shall, doubt-  
 less, find a great difficulty in obtaining servants  
 over Christmas for the simple reason that the dis-  
 honesty of this girl has been exposed. though I  
 should add that, in consequence of her youth and  
 in the fervent hope that she may be reclaimed, I  
 have not prosecuted her. My opinion is that  
 mistresses should be more particular in giving  
 characters. Personally, I am quite agreeable, and  
 when a girl has, as in the above instances, come  
 from a distance, have given her references to the  
 vicar of the parish and to, at least, two old  
 servants who have lived some years with me. My  
 faith is growing less in the servant of to-day. I  
 have no doubt there are many good, honest girls,  
 but I have not been fortunate enough to find one  
 in the past year or so. I shall look for the  
 experience of other employers with great interest.  
 —I am, &c.,                      A DECEIVED MISTRESS.  
 Pembrokeshire, Dec. 9.

Appendix III GA: D/DX401/1, Letter from Helena MacDonald to the Cardiff Lord Mayor regarding the Bute Dowry.

10 Stacey Road, Cardiff,

February 1913.

To The Right Hon. The Lord Mayor,

Dear Sir,

I have much pleasure in recommending my maid, Bessie Cole, for the Marquis of Bute Dowry for domestic servants. She has been in my service since November 1902, and is leaving this summer to be married. During those ten years I have found her most reliable and thoroughly conscientious in every way. She is the eldest of a large family, and has always been ready and willing to help her parents whenever necessary. If there is anything that I can do to enable her to get the Dowry I will gladly endeavour to do it, as it would be such a great help to her in starting life. I believe her intended husband to be an honest, upright, hard-working man and a teetotaler. His work is regular but the wages will be very little to keep house, therefore I am anxious for her to get such a nice nest-egg to begin with. Bessie was baptised and was a member of (?) Baptist Chapel until about a year ago, when she went to the Mission Hall Broadway, where she has been attending ever since. Hoping I have not trespassed too much on your valuable time.

Believe me,

Yours Faithfully,

Helena MacDonald.

## AN ALLEGED DISORDERLY HOUSE AT ABERDARE.

### PROCEEDINGS AGAINST A BEER- HOUSE KEEPER.

At Aberdare Police-court on Tuesday (before Mr. W. M. North, stipendiary; Mr. K. P. Rhys, Mr. D. E. Williams, and Mr. D. P. Davies) Thomas Jones, landlord of the Fountain Beerhouse, Aberdare, was charged on two summonses, one taken out under the Licensing Act, and the other under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, with permitting his house to be used as a brothel on the 28th of October.—Mr. Superintendent Thomas, D.C.C., conducted the case on behalf of the police. Mr. J. Plews, defended, and Mr T. Phillips held a watching brief. In reply to Mr. Plews,

Superintendent Thomas said he intended to proceed first upon the summons under the Licensing Act.

Elizabeth Thomas stated that she formerly lived as waitress at the Lord Nelson Hotel at Milford. While there she saw in the *Western Mail* an advertisement for a barmaid, and in consequence of that advertisement she wrote to "J., 87, Windstreet, Aberdare." She received a reply from the defendant, and after some correspondence she went to Aberdare on the 25th of October. Mr. Jones's son met her at the railway station, and as she was going to the defendant's house she met the defendant, who said, "You've come, have you? I'll be up presently." On the following day she asked Mrs. Jones about the wages, and Mrs. Jones said she had been paying 10s. a month. Witness said that if she had known the wages were so little she wouldn't have come, but Mrs. Jones said, "If you will suit us, we shan't quarrel about the wages, and you will have a comfortable home."

Mr. Thomas was proceeding to question the witness as to what passed at the house on the 27th of October, when Mr. Plews objected to evidence being given relative to any other day than that set out in the summons. After considerable argument, it was eventually decided that the summons should be amended so as to embrace the period extending from the 12th of July to the 28th ult., and the case was adjourned for a week, the Deputy Chief-Constable undertaking to furnish Mr. Plews meanwhile with the specific dates as to which offence was alleged.

## A DISORDERLY HOUSE AT ABERDARE.

### PROCEEDINGS AGAINST A BEER- HOUSE KEEPER.

At Aberdare Police-court on Tuesday (before Mr W. M. North, stipendiary ; Mr. R. H. Rhye, Mr. D. E. Williams, Mr. D. P. Davies, and Mr. J. B. Thomas) Thomas Jones, landlord, of the Fountain Beerhouse, Aberdare, was charged upon two summonses, one taken out under the Licensing Act and the other under the Criminal Law Amendment Act, for permitting his house to be used as a brothel between the 11th of July and the 28th of October. Mr. W. Beddoe appeared on behalf of the police ; Mr. J. Plews defended, and Mr. T. Phillips held a watching brief.

Mr. Beddoe stated the case, saying that he intended first of all to go upon the summons taken out under Section 15 of the Licensing Act.

Jessie Cole said she was formerly a barmaid at the Tredegar Hotel at Cardiff. She came to the Fountain on Monday, the 11th of July, arriving by the last train at ten o'clock. She proceeded at once to the house and slept there that night. On the following day she saw a woman named Margaret Parkinson, whom she had known at Cardiff as a person of bad character. On that day, in the afternoon, she saw a man sitting with her on the sofa in the Fountain parlour. They were in an indecent position. Mrs. Jones was in the bar at the time. One would have to go through the kitchen to get to the parlour, and the entrance to the bar was close to the door of the kitchen. On the Saturday following she saw Parkinson go back and fore into the parlour with men, and observed Mrs. Jones take money from her after coming out. The parlour door was kept shut whilst they were inside. Witness then enumerated many similar cases, and said that she had seen over a dozen strange women come into the house at one time and another and go with men into the parlour and shut the door, and she had seen them hand money to the defendant's wife.

Cross-examined by Mr. Plews: She was 19 years old, and now lived at 28, Cemetery-road, Tre cynon. She had been residing there ever since leaving the defendant's. Her home was at Cardiff. She would swear that she did not go to live at the Fountain Inn on the 20th of June and leave on the 11th of July. Her cousin, Mrs. Bush, was keeping her. She did nothing but assist Mrs. Bush in the household duties. Witness, in answer to further questions, maintained the truth of her previous statements. She asserted that Mr. Jones's son had asked her not to come and give evidence.



Elizabeth Thomas said that she used to live at the Lord Nelson, the principal hotel at Milford Haven. She came to the Fountain on the 25th of October. Whilst at Milford she saw an advertisement in the *Western Mail*, and in response to her reply she was engaged by the defendant, who wrote saying that he wanted a good-looking girl of nice appearance so as to attract custom. Mr. Jones met her at the station, and when she got to the Fountain she saw Mrs. Jones in the passage. Mrs. Jones took her into the parlour and introduced her to a man who was there with a woman. On the 27th of October a Mr. Lloyd came up in the afternoon, and Mrs. Jones told her to take a glass of ale into the parlour to him. She did so. Mr. Lloyd took hold of her to kiss her, but she pushed him away, and when she gave him his change he drew her to the sofa. She asked him what he meant, and he said, "What are you here for?" He afterwards apologised for his behaviour. On the Thursday or the Friday she saw a man in the parlour sitting on the sofa with Mary, the servant maid. Mary subsequently called her upstairs to the bedroom, and when she got there she saw the same man sitting on the bed. Mary told her to come to him, as he wanted to speak to her, but she refused, and Mary went down and told Mrs. Jones. She took a glass of ale in to him whilst he was in the parlour after Mary had gone out, and he took hold of her. Mrs. Jones asked her if he had done so, and she said he had, whereupon Mrs. Jones remarked, "Never mind, he has got plenty of money." After coming downstairs she went quietly up again in a few minutes, and saw the man and Mary there.

Cross-examined: Witness said that she went out one day to Cwmpark with a young man named Moffat, whom she had picked up at Milford, and with whom she was keeping company. They went to the house of a Mrs. Harris, where Moffat lodged, and, in a joke, he introduced her as Mrs. Moffat. He did not take her to a Mrs. Salmon's, and arrange to hire lodgings for her. Mrs. Jones did not tell her that she wouldn't suit. When she left Mr. Jones said he would go to the railway station and get a ticket to Milford for her, but he did not return. However, he afterwards sent her the money by a porter. She made no demand for wages, and no angry altercation took place with reference to the salary. Witness gave privately to the magistrates the names of men other than Lloyd whom she had seen at the Fountain.

Samuel Thomas, ripper, of 40, Lake-street, Fern-dale, and Inspector Thorne also gave evidence for the prosecution.

In pronouncing the decision of the magistrates, Mr. North said:—Jones, we haven't the slightest doubt that you have kept one of the most shameless, filthy, and abominable houses which have been kept in this or any other country. You have advertised for young girls, and brought them there in hopes that their ruin would be accomplished and your gains increased, and now that they have come forward as witnesses your only defence is to try and blacken those unfortunate girls' characters. Under the circumstances we inflict the fullest penalty we are able to impose, and that is £20 and costs, or three months' imprisonment.

Notice of appeal was given. The summons under the Criminal Law Amendment Act was withdrawn.

Appendix VI Average wages offered to servants in the 'situations vacant' advertisements in the *Western Mail*.

Position	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921
Between-maid						£26.00
Cook	£25.50	£20.00	£18.57	£21.17	£26.83	£45.67
Cook-General			£14.00	£17.60	£20.29	£45.00
Cook-Housekeeper					£26.00	
Cook-Housemaid			£40.00			
Gardener						£156
General Servant	£9.00	£13.00	£13.33	£14.25	£14.43	£42.40
Housemaid	£10.33		£20	£16.25	£20.00	£28.00
Housemaid-Waitress				£18.00		
House-Parlourmaid			£13.33	£16.67	£18.33	£33.67
Kitchenmaid				£15.00	£18.00	£26.00
Lady's Maid					£29.00	
Laundry Maid			£20.00	£14.00		£45.00
Nurse-Housemaid			£8.00	£12.00		
Nursemaid	£8.00	£18.00	£15.00	£16.00	£24.00	£48.00
Parlourmaid					£24.33	
Porter			£20.00			£65.00
Portress						£45.00
Scullerymaid						£14.00
Steward					£30.00	
Under Housemaid				£12.00		
Under Parlourmaid					£18.00	
Waitress			£16.00	£16.00		
Wardmaid			£10.00			
Working Housekeeper			£16.00		£24.00	£35.00

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